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**APRIL 1961** 

NUMBER 7

Harold C. Martin: The Status of the Profession

### LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION

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Archibald A. Hill: Linguistic Principles for Interpreting Meaning

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### Advisory Editors for College English

At its business meeting on November 26, 1960, in Chicago, NCTE's College Section passed the following motion: "College English advisors will no longer be selected by the membership but will be appointed by the College Section Committee from a list of names submitted by the editor, who will solicit names from the College Section Committee, the retiring members of the advisory board, and the membership at large."

There were several reasons given for the change in method of selecting advisory editors. The old system was cumbersome and clumsy, and especially difficult in its deadlines; it proved embarrassing to ask two distinguished scholars to run against each other for a position which neither coveted; and votes were frequently cast in ignorance and at random, with little relevance to qualifications important to the position. In addition to eliminating these disadvantages, a number of advantages of the new system were advanced. It should prove easier to replace advisors who cannot serve for such reasons as removal from the country or a sudden shift in position and responsibility. And it should be simpler to create new advisory posts in response to the actual needs for editorial assistance as determined by the nature and volume of manuscripts submitted.

In accord with the new method of selecting advisory editors, we wish now to call for suggestions from the present advisors, from the College Section Committee, and from the subscribers to College English. If you will submit with the names a brief biographical

sketch outlining qualifications for a specific advisory post, we shall better be able to compile a list of nominees to submit to the College Section Committee for vote.

The following postitions will fall vacant January 1, 1962:

Shakespeare American since 1912
18th Century British
American to 1912
Poetry

American since 1912
Composition
Criticism

In addition to these nine posts, 19th Century British will also fall vacant, but we are requesting that it be eliminated and that two new posts be created in its place:

Romantic Victorian

And we are also requesting that, because of the large number af articles on the novel submitted, two additional posts be created:

British Novel American Novel

Some posts have overlapped in the past, and these new posts will cover areas already covered in part. But such duplication enables the editor to prevent overburdening advisory editors who happen to be in extremely active fields.

We await your suggestions with great interest. We hope to complete a list of nominations to submit to the College Section Chairman, William S. Ward, by the middle of June.

James E. Miller, Jr.

### For Contributors and Readers

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# COLLEGE ENGLISH

Volume 22

**APRIL 1961** 

Number 7

### The Status of the Profession

HAROLD C. MARTIN

There has been so much talk in the past months about "national images" that I venture on this topic, "The Status of the Profession," with some uneasiness. No one doubts seriously that what people think of us English teachers reflects in some measure what we are; but images, as politicians and advertisers know all too well, also produce feedback. We become in some measure what people think we are, either from right-minded or wrong-minded obstinacy or from unconscious imitation of the image-the artists following the naturals, so to speak. Behind the complex image of status which we enjoy, or endure, however, there is a reality, and it is that reality to which our attention should properly be drawn. We cannot, I think, do much

about status directly; or if we can, we should not try, at least until we are sure that the reality warrants a change, that our house is really in order.

The term I would use then is not the "status" but the "state" of the profession. On that, I can speak with some assurance that I am not simply jargonizing the obvious or extrapolating the incidental. The state of the profession is not good, If I were a doctor and the profession my only patient, I would give serious thought to taking some night courses in law, for the only diagnosis I can make suggests less need for medicine than for corporate reorganization or a last will and testament.

Lest you think I exaggerate, let me provide at once the substantive ground of my concern. Without reciting statistics as familiar to you as to me, I begin by reminding you that, in 1970, half of the high school graduates of the country will be attending some sort of post-highschool institution. Since all, or nearly all, of them will be enrolled in at least one course in English, we can certainly look forward to employment of some sort, if employment be our main objective. Already the Ph.D. in English is becoming a prize package for those institutions concerned with healthy accreditation: since 1950, the proportion of college teachers holding a doctorate has dropped twenty-five percent, and this is only the beginning of the bulge. The most recent studies of graduate schools make the picture even gloomier,

Director, General Education A, Harvard, and author of Logic and Rhetoric of Exposition (1957), Inquiry and Expression (1957), and Style in Prose Fiction (1959), Dr. Martin writes: "The epithet 'Cassandra' popped up several times after this talk at MLA (College English Section Luncheon, December 27, 1960), and I am undoubtedly at fault for using so drastic a phrase as 'disaster at our doorsteps.' Of course I do not despair. If I did, I should not now be working with the Commission on English. It is precisely because I am hopeful and because I know that there are thousands of excellent English teachers in the country looking for support that I think it necessary not to conceal or muffle even the most distressing data. The public and the profession must know, better than they do now, the size of the job ahead, or neither will give the support essential to improvement. And without that support, moral and financial, even excellent teachers are deprived of the opportunity to work as well as they can."

for though the numbers of new doctorates in English is rising a little, the number in relation to demand is steadily falling. Which ever side you take in the current debate about the value of the present doctoral programs in our graduate schools, you cannot look on this condition with much optimism. The simple axiom that the man with longer training is likely to be better at his job than the one with less is, in the end, more powerful than arguments about quality. And the clear prognosis is for a steady rise, except for the most favored institutions, in the number of college teachers holding the master's-or only the bachelor's-degree.

The first fact to recognize, then, is that the complexion of our college faculties will change noticeably in the next decade. The sociology of this change will be a wonderful, and perhaps fearsome, thing to watch; it may very well create a radically new pattern of undergraduate instruction. At present, nine of every ten new Ph.D.'s spend the first years of their employment teaching freshman English. And it is safe to sav that eight and nine-tenths of that nine, however well or even pleasantly they teach the course, consider it a durance vile or a purgatory through which all must pass in order to look upon the face of beauty bare. As surely as we can predict anything, we can predict that college teachers without a doctorate will be increasingly hired only to teach freshman English. Yet the complacency and relief with which doctors of English may look upon such a neat adjustment is, I think, largely illusory. Inevitably, as the budgets of English departments rise to provide staff for the myriad freshman English sections, the pinch will become greater on other parts of the English program. That is indeed already happening, and the result can only be a longer retention, perhaps an indefinite one, of the young doctor in the freshman course and, gradually, the assumption of sections in it by man with long seniority.

Given this situation—and it is, after all, not a new one-what is being done about it? Almost nothing. Though freshman English has long been the major teaching activity of many English departments, and though it promises to become a bastion, scarcely a graduate English program in the land requires any work in language or rhetoric of its members. So long as young doctors could expect to pass through freshman English in a year or two or three, that condition was understandable, if deplorable. In the face of what is to come, it is clearly irresponsible, for anyone who knows anything at all about freshman English knows that it is hard to teach and that it requires knowledge and skill that few have when they complete their graduate work. The plain truth is that most do not even know they do not have it, and some never find out. They go on transmitting themselves in the hope-sometimes realized, of course-that what they do know will somehow become relevant to those they are teaching, at least to the best of them.

Of college courses in English beyond freshman English I need say but little at this point. Some are good, and some are bad, as with everything else. But of one thing about them we are all uneasily aware. Good or bad, in many places they have relatively few takers. One of the large state universities, with an excellent English department, has eighty English majors; business administration has two thousand. That is perhaps an extreme example, but others are near enough to point up the disaster at our doorsteps.

It is clear to everyone that, for the present and for a long time to come, we shall have a required course in freshman English in our colleges, even if it snuffs out everything else. If we go on ignoring preparation to teach it decently in our graduate schools, it will not get any

better and is likely to get much worse. It is not likely, if that be true, to stimulate greater numbers to become English majors. And if the number of English majors does not rise, the number of qualified secondary-school teachers of English will continue to decline. The more it declines, the greater the need will become for courses in English preliminary to the traditional course. Such remedial courses are already costing colleges twelve million dollars a year, by the best estimates available; and it takes \$600,000 a year just to sort out those on whom we annually spend the twelve millions.

In this never-never land of the population explosion, we may come to cherish the freshman course as a way of keeping our jobs, but few of us are likely to regard that dearness as a nearness to our aspirations or as a bright beacon luring the people we teach to follow in our footsteps. The radical solution, proposed by Professor Warner Rice a year ago and voiced a thousand times in English offices everywhere, is to draw a broad black line across the curricular schedule, just above freshman English, and announce firmly, "Below this we shall not go. Let the schools do their job, and we shall do ours." The proposal is at least no placebo, and looked at from the distance of a century it might be regarded as the cautery that maims but saves. But, as Professor Rice knew very well when he made the proposal, there is not going to be any such surgery. Neither the colleges nor the schools can stand it, and the public will not.

It is natural for the public to expect that colleges will do what needs to be done, and for the colleges to expect that the schools will take their full share of the job. The public may not—indeed, it does not—know how to get what it wants but, to use the words of an ancient wise man, it knows where the shoe pinches. It points the finger of blame at the schools because they are at hand, because they

are susceptible to pressure, and because they are truly responsible. But we who teach in the colleges cannot blithely, or angrily, do the same, for every finger pointed at the schools is also pointed at the colleges. The school teachers were, a few years ago, our students; and if they do badly because they are ignorant and untrained, the fault is at least partly ours.

Before I press this point, which is really the main one I shall make, I want to qualify the public broadside which I have seemed to commend. The unsatisfactory state of secondary-school English is the result, not of one, but of three main causes. One, it is conducted under unbelievably bad working conditions; two, it is conducted by teachers often ill-prepared to do their jobs; three, it is conducted, more often than not, in a welter of confusion.

Consider these conditions. Most teachers of English meet five classes a day, many meet six, some meet four. In Michigan, the average pupil-load is 126 students; in Virginia, somewhere between 121 and 160; in Indiana, twenty-eight percent of the teachers meet between 150 and 199 daily, and two percent meet over 200. And this, mind you, not in lecture halls but in classrooms just big enough to hold thirty or forty squirming bodies. Nor are the classes neat collections of students roughly comparable in ability and competence. The normal condition is one with a fifty or sixty-degree range in I. Q. and a reading-ability range of four or five grades. In fact, most high schools in the United States are so small that talk of homogeneous grouping is largely irrelevant. And that is not all. The average expenditure per pupil for free textbooks was \$2.71 in 1955-1956. In 1958-1959, the average expenditure per pupil for library books was \$1.60, enough to buy about one book for three people. Moreover, most states forbid teachers to require that their students buy extra books, andgrimly enough-if they were to permit it, not one in thirty communities has a

bookstore from which a purchase or a selection could readily be made. Add this consideration: the English teacher spends, on the average, two hours a day working on extracurricular activities, including faculty committees; and he conducts one study-hall and a homeroom. In short, he has worked forty hard hours at least before he puts a minute into class-preparation, correction of themes, or an effort to keep his mind alert by reading something other than what he teaches. There is more to this dismal story, but I will spare you the detail.

What preparation, other than Montaigne's prescription for "resolution and sufferance," does the secondary-school teacher bring to this onerous job? About half of these teachers had majors in English, define "major" however you will. In 1958, nearly thirty thousand of themabout a third-did not meet even the minimum qualifications of the state accreditation pattern. How serious that is, you can gather from the fact that the minimum qualification, on the average, is eighteen hours, freshman English plus four other semester courses; in sixteen states it is only twelve. Despite these low requirements, the demand for secondaryschool English teachers is outrunning the supply by twenty-seven percent.

Even if we look on the bright side of the picture, that of the fifty percent who have some sort of major in English, we find it a good deal more like Gustav Doreé than Van Gogh. College students preparing to teach English in secondary schools can, in five colleges out of six, fulfill the teaching-major without a course in modern literature or literary criticism; in four out of five, without any study at all of the history of the language. Only two of five English departments-and most of these in teachers' colleges-require a course in composition beyond freshman English; about half require a single course in methods of teaching English. The general pattern is to require from eighteen to twenty-

four credit hours for a major, an amount surely insufficient, and to leave choice of courses, as my figures show, largely to chance or predilection. Three courses, in addition to freshman English, are generally required: a survey, a course in Shakespeare, and one in American literature. About a third of our colleges-again, principally teachers' colleges-require a course in world literature, a subject of considerable importance to the secondary-school program, Ironically enough, considering the state of freshman prose, only one department in ten requires a course in the study of non-fiction, though of course some study of nonfiction must be assumed in the period courses required in one out of four. Only one department in ten, moreover, requires a course in Chaucer or Middle English, next to a course in the history of language the nearest approach-and that not very near-to formal study of the linguistic structure secondary-school English teachers are supposed to have at their fingertips.

Statistics have not converted many, I know, and I apologize for the burden of them in this talk. But if they do not convert, they may at least draw attention to what must be faced and should be faced willingly: the need for radical correction of collegiate and graduate programs in English if there is to be any hope of lasting improvement in the secondary schools.

When the Commission on English began its work a year and a half ago, it made the sort of assessment I have outlined here. The data I have cited come, I should note, from an unpublished document recently prepared by a committee of the National Council of Teachers of English, under the chairmanship of its Executive Secretary, Professor James Squire, of Illinois; but the Commission's assessment, more impressionistic, coincides in every important matter. In the face of that assessment, it had to decide on a course of action—whether to

work directly with secondary-school teachers or to hunt for some means of bringing college departments of English to see where their duty, as well as their best interest, lies. The choice was between frying pan and fire, for though high school teachers are dispersed, they are clamoring for support and help, and though departments of English are relatively few and easily reached, they are notoriously reluctant to have other people mind their business for them. We decided to do what you would probably have decided to do in the same situation: to work with, and for, those who would welcome us.

We have asked twenty colleges and universities, nearly all in well-populated areas, to help us establish a like number of summer institutes for highschool teachers, each giving three graduate courses-one each in literature, composition, and language. These institutes they are to staff as they do their summer schools, with people from their own and other faculties. In late summer of 1961 the staff members will meet at Michigan for three weeks to work out the institute programs. In the summer of 1962, about nine hundred high school teachers, supported by \$600 stipends, will attend the institutes. In the following semester, one member of each staff will be on half-time at his institution to work with the fortyfive who attended it. The program alone with money supplied wholly or in part by the College Entrance Examination Board, will cost over a half million dollars. Yet it will reach only one percent of those now teaching English in the schools! Obviously no such expenditure is warranted by any private agency unless it can reach many more, so the Commission will make the short 1961 session the ground for starting three volumes of syllabi and the 1962 session the means of testing and refining them. By the winter of 1962 we hope to have in print three clear-cut, carefully developed volumes (or, possibly, one large

volume in three parts) for widespread distribution. How we shall continue our work beyond that date, I cannot say, but we do hope that, with these volumes in hand, we shall be able to approach colleges with some justification for our temerity in doing so.

In the meantime, however, we hope that colleges will begin to look seriously at what lies ahead and to take useful steps toward ensuring that the students they graduate as English majors, at least, and the graduate students they send on to college-teaching are properly trained for the professional responsibilities they will meet. That will take time, but it cannot be put off. In many places it has already begun, I know, and in some it was begun years ago; but in most, unless my figures lie, it is largely untouched. While the needed reconstruction takes place, college teachers can help immensely in another way.

The third of the three conditions to which I attributed unsatisfactory secondary school preparation, you may remember, is confusion. Perhaps no one is particularly at fault about the confusion. No nation in the world is culturally strong enough to embark on a program of nearly universal high school education, let alone on one of giving post-high school education to half its young, without encountering, or making, confusion. And not even those nations with longestablished and centrally organized systems of education have been able to escape the confusion that has come in the wake of technological achievements in communication. In the United States these two sources of confusion-the technological revolution and the noble aim of universal education-have been supplemented by another: the pragmatism of William James and the instrumentalism of John Dewey. The effects that popularization of these two philosophical theories have had on elementary and secondary education have been many and not by any means all bad.

They have destroyed, we can hope for good, the concept of education as rote learning, a concept inimical to that enlightenment of mind which is one of the primary goals of all education; they have destroyed the rigidities of curriculum that worked to preserve and institutionalize superstition and archaic information; they have brought into the schools, which should be if not a microcosm of society at least a reflection of it, some of the spirit of democratic responsibility. But popularization is always avid of excess, and those same popularizations have encouraged the notions that immediate relevance is everything, that what is done in concert is intrinsically superior to what is done alone, that sane decisions are the inevitable result of public referenda, even if they are referenda of ignorance. To these excesses the vagary-ridden development of the psychology of learning has added further confusion.

College teachers, by and large, have escaped the confusion by working according to the simple, though perhaps benighted, axiom that their main job is to increase and purvey knowledge in the belief that understanding and a noble concept of action will follow. Schoolteachers, whatever their inclinations in this respect, have increasingly found themselves working under conditions that make such a simple axiom untenable. Their world is largely one not of individual but of corporate enterprise; of communal rather than personal decision; of subject-matter chosen and treated for its current importance rather than for its lasting significance. In the schools art is overwhelmed by society. Though not a fully accurate description of classroom practice, that, I believe, is a fair description of the dominant spirit of the schools. And the fact that it is not a fully accurate description of practice only points up the confusion. What English teachers learn in the colleges, at least in the English departments, is

in many respects alien to what they encounter at work. The uneasy alliance they maintain between the two, often at no small cost to their status and to their conscience, requires an effort they should not have to make alone, for if they are left alone to make it they cannot succeed. For good and ill, our schools are the children-sometimes the stepchildren-of the state and of the community. Authority and power flow downward to the classroom, not upward from it. Even in schools where curriculum committees ostensibly set the teaching patterns, the committees are agents not of the teaching body but of the administration, and they inevitably tune their instruments to the prevailing administrative ethos.

That there are justifications for that ethos, none of us can deny. But its prevalence presupposes teachers so well trained and so clearly committed to the essential disciplines of their art that they can operate efficiently within it. That presupposition, I need hardly iterate, is unsound. And it will become progessively more unrealistic as the decade advances unless, as I said earlier, colleges and universities will take greater care to ensure that their graduates in English are richly trained for the work they must do.

In the meantime-and here I come to the way in which college teachers can "help immensely" while the slow process of curricular improvement in the colleges goes on-we need to move swiftly to heal the breach that has developed in this century between our institutions and the schools that supply them with students. Fifty years ago, the breach was not so wide; or, if wide, it was not considered someone else's concern. The College Entrance Examination Board itself was born out of the determination of college teachers to improve teaching in secondary schools. And it was itself but the culmination of many steps taken by college teachers to clarify the secondary

curriculum and to work with those who taught it. As I look back on the history of that period, I see something like a guild conscience at work, a sense of the fraternity of English teachers that we have largely lost as members have overwhelmed us and the proliferation of academic responsibilities has accelerated. While few of us can hope to deal with all the schools that supply our students (my own college drew its freshman class this year from 680 schools), all of us can do something for and with the schools in our immediate region. Sir Charles Show recently proposed that good scientists ought to be ready to give a tenth of their time to considerations of national policy. If we are to make things better than they are, or even prevent them from getting worse, English teachers ought, I think, to be ready to give a like amount of time, in one way or another-and there are manyto the work of the schools. Because, through no special virtue but through the advantages of our situation, we have been able to remain relatively clearheaded about what we are doing, we can materially reduce the confusion that surrounds the teaching of English, and I believe that we have an obligation to do so. For some that obligation will inevitably become a social one, an obligation to work at the highest levels on

the improvement of the schools. For most of us it can more profitably be what I have called an obligation to the guild, to the profession, an obligation to help all those who teach English to teach it soundly and imaginatively, either by what we do especially with or for those who are about to become teachers of English or by what we do with or for those already teaching in the schools.

A few weeks ago a professor of English in one of the great state universities concluded his description of their massive problems with the gloomy reflection, "Everywhere we are in retreat." I know that he has much greater reason than I have to feel despair, but if we allow "the melancholy long withdrawing roar" to bewitch us, not only we but the culture we believe in will go under. The Commission on English is in itself but a reed to wave against the wind. We hope that, in Pascal's phrase, it is a thinking reed, but we know that it can be little more than an emblem. The state of the profession is perilous, and nothing but a double commitment now can save it: a commitment to excellence in the special work each of us does, and a commitment to the welfare of all others who press wine from the same grapes.

### Where Our Grammar Came From

KARL W. DYKEMA

The title of this paper is too brief to be quite accurate. Perhaps with the following subtitle it does not promise too much: A partial account of the origin and development of the attitudes which commonly pass for grammatical in Western culture and particularly in English-speaking societies.

The etymology of grammar shows rather sharp changes in meaning: It starts with Greek gramma, letter (of the alphabet), itself a development from graphein, draw or write. The plural

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grammata develops in meaning through letters to alphabet to the rudiments of writing, to the rudiments of learning. The adjective form grammatike with techne meant the art of knowing one's letters. From this form comes the Latin grammaticus. The medieval vernacular forms with r are something of a mystery, appearing first in Old Provençal as gramaira and developing in English with a variety of spellings, often with only one m and ending in er. One of the more amusing forms is that with the first r

dissimilated to l, glamour.

In present usage at least four senses can be distinguished which have an application to language: (1) The complete structural pattern of a language learned unconsciously by the child as he acquires his native tongue; (2) an attempt to describe objectively and systematically this fundamental structure, usually called descriptive grammar; (3) a partial description of the language based on puristic or pedagogical objectives, usually called prescriptive grammar, (4) a conviction held by a good many people that somewhere there is an authoritative book called a grammar, the conscientious memorization of which will eliminate all difficulties from their use of language. This I call grammar as remedy. It is mainly with the last two of these notions of grammar that I shall concern myself, prescriptive grammar and grammar as remedy, and how the earlier conceptions of grammar were metamorphosed into them.

As the etymology of the word suggests, Western grammar begins with the ancient Greeks. As early as Plato we find in the Sophist the statement that a word describing action is a verb (rhema), one which performs the action is a noun (onoma). Aristotle adds conjunctions (syndesmoi), recognizes that sentences have predicates, and is aware of three genders and of inflection (Rhetoric, etc.). The Stoics attempted to separate linguistic study from philos-

ophy and made important contributions to the discipline. In their writings we find terms which are approximately equivalent to noun, verb, conjunction, article, number, gender, case, voice, mood, and tense.¹ But the direct source of most of our widely used grammatical terms is Dionysius Thrax's little Techne Grammatike, which Gilbert Murray recollects his great-uncle still using at the Merchants Taylors' School in the nineteenth century to learn Greek from.²

A few quotations from this little work will illustrate how close many of our school grammars still are to their source

of more than 2000 years ago:

A sentence is a combination of words, either in prose or verse, making complete sense . . . Of discourse there are eight parts: noun, verb, participle, article, pronoun, preposition, adverb, and conjunction . . . A noun is a part of discourse having cases, indicating a body (as 'stone') or a thing (as 'education'), and is used in a common and a peculiar way (i.e., is common or proper) . . . . A verb is a word without case, admitting tenses, persons, and numbers, and indicating action and passion (i.e., being-acted-upon) . . . . A pronoun is a word indicative of definite persons and used in place of a noun . The adverb is an uninflected part of discourse, used of a verb or subjoined to a verb . . . . The conjunction is a word conjoining or connecting thought in some order and filling a gap in the expression.3

The few examples I have given emphasize analysis by meaning, because that is the aspect of classical grammar which our traditional grammar has dwelt upon. But the definitions of noun and verb, it should be observed, begin with formal

'Gilbert Murray, Greek Studies (Oxford,

1946), p. 181.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>R. H. Robins, Ancient and Medieval Grammatical Theory in Europe (London, 1951), pp. 20-35.

bu The Grammar of Dionysius Thrax," translated . . . by Thos. Davidson, *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, VIII (1874), 326-339.

distinctions-case and tense-and throughout the work there is clearly an awareness of the importance of structure in the functioning of the language. The contribution of the Greeks to linguistics was a great one, as Gilbert Murray and others have pointed out. But for twenty centuries their work was carried on by slavish and unimaginative imitators incapable of developing the work of their predecessors. Especially in the less highly inflected languages like English and French it did not occur to them that the inflectional devices of Latin and Greek must have some counterpart in the structure of the modern language.

Though today there are a few scholars in universities who assert that they pursue grammar for its own sake as an academic discipline, most people conceive of grammar only as a utilitarian thing, as a means of learning to use a language correctly. This notion was certainly completely absent from the thinking of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, and probably from that of Dionysius Thrax. Grammar began as a philosophical inquiry into the nature of language. Now, for most people, it is merely a dogmatic means of achieving correctness. It is this transformation that I am mainly concerned with.

How the transformation took place is not easy to document. Perhaps the most plausible explanation lies in the familiar desire of younger teachers to regurgitate undigested fragments of what they have swallowed in the course of their higher education. All too often a high school teacher just out of college will use his college lecture notes as the foundation of his high school teaching, or a teacher of undergraduates tries to give them exactly what he got in his graduate seminar.

Then there is the fundamental difference between the prevailing purposes of elementary and advanced instruction. Primary education is severely utilitarian; and though it can hardly be denied that,

especially in our society, graduate instruction is often infected by utilitarianism, the speculative approach does persist, and inquiry for its own sake plays a major role. The curriculum at all levels of education is and has been determined partly by tradition, partly by immediate utilitarian objectives, partly by a desire to perpetuate the best elements of the cultural heritage. The application of these criteria is of ascending difficulty. Easiest is to accept without question the practice of one's predecessors; not much harder is to accept a limited practical goal and provide instruction intended to achieve it. Most difficult is to select critically what is most valuable in the cultural heritage, and the Romans weren't up to it.

Because of Greek prestige in the ancient world, less developed cultures borrowed extensively from that of Greece. The influence of Greek art, philosophy, and literature on Rome is familiar, but Greek grammar was quite as influential and became the model not only for grammars of Latin but of Syriac, Armenian, Hebrew, and possibly Arabic as well.

It could not be a good model. The structure of every language is peculiar to itself-though there are, of course similarities between members of the same linguistic family-and the best description of it derives from a careful examination of the language itself, not from an attempt to fit it into the pattern of another. To be sure, both Greek and Latin are rich in inflections and the Latin of Varro was not much further away from the parent Indo-European than was the Greek of Dionysius Thrax; so the deformation imposed by the model was less distorting than when the same procedure was followed many centuries later and attempts were made to straitjacket the modern vernaculars of Europe within the model of Latin grammar. For example, Greek had a definite article, Latin had none, though in Varro's De

Lingua Latina, the term articuli is applied to the demonstratives is and hic (VIII, 45, 51). Latin has more cases but a different tense system and no dual. English has only two inflected active tenses against six for Latin, but many more periphrastic verbal constructions than had Latin.

The attention given to grammar by the ancients seems to have been considerable. Susemihl in his History of Greek Literature in the Alexandrian Period discusses over fifty grammarians. One of them, Aristophanes of Byzantium (ca. 257-ca. 180 B.C.), was librarian to Ptolomy Epiphanius, who imprisoned him to prevent the king of Pergamum

from hiring him away. Among the Romans, grammarians were also in demand. The slave Lutatius Daphnis, a grammarian, was bought for 700,000 sesterces, perhaps \$35,000, which puts him about in the class of a lesser baseball player. Caesar put this Lutatius Daphnis in charge of the public libraries, though it was not until much later, according to Suetonius, that a regular salary of 100,000 sesterces was paid from the privy purse for Latin and Greek teachers of rhetoric (Suetonius, Lives of the Caesars, VIII, xviii). Caesar himself took part in one of the persisting grammatical quarrels of the time, that of the analogists and the anomalists, by producing a work called De Analogia, known to us only in fragments. Though he favored the analogists, who demanded complete inflectional consistency, it is significant that he wanted no radical departures from usage.4 Suetonius also states that Claudius "invented three new letters and added them to the [Latin] alphabet, maintaining that they were greatly needed; he published a book on their theory when he was still in private life, and when he became emperor had no difficulty in bringing about their general use" (Suetonius, Lives of the Caesars,

<sup>o</sup>Jean Collart, Varron, Grammairien Latin (Paris, 1954), pp. 10, 19, 146; Robins, p. 58. V, xli). Theodore Roosevelt was less successful when he tried to impose a few spelling reforms on the Government Printing Office; Congress refused to per-

mit the changes.

Though Caesar favored the analogists, he was unwilling to depart from established usage. His position was that of many of his cultivated contemporaries, as it has been of many cultivated people ever since. The appeal of analogy is the appeal of logic, a creation of the Greeks and a tool that has been used with interesting and surprising effects in most areas of Western thought ever since, The foundation of Aristotelian logic is the syllogism. As the analogists applied the syllogism to language it worked like this: The form of the personal pronoun determines the form of the verb of which the pronoun is the subject. The form you is plural; therefore the form of the verb be which follows it must be plural; hence you were, not you was. So we have in cultivated English today only you were. But the cultivated dare not apply this syllogism to the intensive or reflexive, where the eighteenth-century practice of agreement with the notional number of the pronoun still persists. The eighteenth century had both you was there yourself and you were there yourselves; while we have you were there yourselves when the notional number of you is plural, but you were there yourself when it is singular.

Language has its own logic, which it is the function of the descriptive grammarian to discover if he can. Whatever it may be, it is not Aristotelian logic. But for two millennia our attitudes toward language have been colored by the assumption that the system of a language can be analyzed and prescribed by an intellectual tool that is inapplicable.

Conformity to a standard, or correctness if you like, is, of course, socially of the greatest importance. There is a long record of the penalties imposed on those who deviate from the standard, the earli-

est I know of being the account given in Judges (12, 4-6) of the forty and two thousand Ephraimites who were slain by the Gileadites because they pronounced shibboleth sibboleth. Later examples are less gory. Aristophanes in the Lysistrata (lines 81-206) ridicules the dialect of the Spartan women, though they are the allies of the Athenian women in their campaign of sexual frustration. Stephen Runciman in his Byzantine Civilization says "the Patriarch Nicetas in the Eleventh Century was laughed at for his Slavonic accent, and the statesman Margarites treated with disrespect in the Thirteenth because he spoke with a rough rustic voice." And Chaucer's nun spoke the provincial French of the Benedictine nunnery of Stratford-Bow, the French of Paris-standard French-being to her un-

Conformity to the standard is what matters. But how is the standard to be determined? Quintilian, whom Professor T. W. Baldwin calls "The Supreme Authority" in his Shakespeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke, provides a most illuminating basis for discussion. In the Institutes Quintilian tells us that:

Language is based on reason, antiquity, authority and usage. Reason finds its chief support in analogy and sometimes in etymology. As for antiquity, it is commended to us by the possession of a certain majesty, I might almost say sanctity. Authority as a rule we derive from orators and historians. For poets, owing to the necessities of metre, are allowed a certain licence . . . . The judgment of a supreme orator is placed on the same level as reason, and even error brings no disgrace, if it results from treading in the footsteps of such distinguished guides. Usage however is the surest pilot in speaking, and we should treat language as currency minted with the public stamp. But in all cases we have need of a critical judgment, . . . . (I.vi.1-3)

<sup>4</sup>Stephen Runciman, Byzantine Civilization (Meridian Books, New York, 1956), pp. 173, 176. This is fuller than Horace's neater statement: "Use is the judge, and law, and rule of speech" (De Arte Poetica, 72: Quem [usus] penes arbitrium est et ius et norma loquendi.) and shows more clearly why we have troubles. Usage "is the surest pilot" but "we have need of a critical judgment."

Quintilian has more to say on the matter:

Usage remains to be discussed. For it would be almost laughable to prefer the language of the past to that of the present day, and what is ancient speech but ancient usage of speaking? But even here the critical faculty is necessary, and we must make up our minds what we mean by usage. If it be defined merely as the practice of the majority, we shall have a very dangerous rule affecting not merely style but life as well, a far more serious matter. For where is so much good to be found that what is right should please the majority? The practices of depilation, of dressing the hair in tiers, or of drinking to excess at the baths, although they may have thrust their way into society, cannot claim the support of usage, since there is something to blame in all of them (although we have usage on our side when we bathe or have our hair cut or take our meals together). So too in speech we must not accept as a rule of language words and phrases that have become a vicious habit with a number of persons. To say nothing of the language of the uneducated, so we are all of us well aware that whole theatres and the entire crowd of spectators will often commit barbarisms in the cries which they utter as one man. I will therefore define usage in speech as the agreed practice of educated men, just as where our way of life is concerned I should define it as the agreed practice of all good men. (I.vi. 43-45)

But Quintilian makes it quite apparent from the many examples he cites that educated men are not entirely agreed on their practice, and that they lean heavily on the authority of Greek usage: More recent scholars have instituted the practice of giving Greek nouns their Greek declension, although this is not always possible. Personally I prefer to follow the Latin method, so far as grace of diction will permit. For I should not like to say Calypsonem on the analogy of lunonem, although Gaius Caesar in deference to antiquity does adopt this way of declining it. Current practice has however prevailed over his authority. In other words which can be declined in either way without impropriety, those who prefer it can employ the Greek form: they will not be speaking Latin, but will not on the other hand deserve censure. (I.v. 63-64)

A thorough knowledge of Greek, learned from slave-tutors, had long been common among educated Romans, but it was Varro who transferred the entire body of Greek grammatical scholarship to Latin in his *De Lingua Latina*, written between 47 and 45 B.C. Though of the original 25 books of that work only V through X survive relatively intact, we have a fairly good account of what was in the rest because Varro is the source which all later Latin grammarians follow, and they have apparently borrowed from him most faithfully.

Greek grammar, is, then, a development of Greek philosophy, an attempt to treat systematically an important aspect of human behavior. It is a late development which in Alexandrian culture is given a practical application through its use in the editing, elucidation, and interpretation of texts, especially that of Homer; and in the correction of solecisms. Since there was little of the speculative in the Romans, Varro's encyclopedic treatment of Latin language and literature was the ultimate source of a host of school texts.

What has been presented so far is a partial account of the development of philology, though this ancient term has been an ambiguous one for almost as long as it has existed—naturally enough, since it derives from the Greek roots

usually translated as *love* and *word*. Some people love words as the means of argument, others because they are the foundation of literature, others still for their forms and relations in discourse. All these senses have been designated by the word since it first appeared in Greek, and in nineteenth-century France and Germany it normally included literary history, textual and literary criticism, and linguistics. (We might well revive the word; it would provide a single term by which we could describe ourselves along with chemists, historians, and the rest; we are philologists.)

The ancients called the various aspects of this study by a variety of names: philologos, grammatikos, grammatistes, kritikos in Greek; philologus, grammaticus, litterator, criticus in Latin. They were evidently no more certain of exactly what the terms signified than we are today with similar terms. Suetonius writes:

The term grammaticus became prevalent through Greek influence, but at first such men were called litterati. Cornelius Nepos, too, in a little book in which he explains the difference between litteratus and eruditus says that the former is commonly applied to those who can speak or write on any subject accurately, cleverly and with authority; but that it should strictly be used of interpreters of the poets, whom the Greeks call grammatici. That these were also called litteratores is shown by Messala Corvinus in one of his letters, in which he says: "I am not concerned with Furius Bibaculus, nor with Ticidas either, or with the litterator Cato." For he unquestionably refers to Valerius Cato, who was famous both as a poet and as a grammarian. Some however make a distinction between litteratus and litterator, as the Greeks do between grammaticus and grammatista, using the former of a master of his subject, the latter of one moderately proficient. Orbilius too supports this view by examples, saying: "In the days of our forefathers, when anyone's slaves were offered for sale, it was

not usual except in special cases to advertise any one of them as *litteratus* but rather as *litterator*, implying that he had a smattering of letters, but was not a finished scholar."

The grammarians of early days taught rhetoric as well, and we have treatises from many men on both subjects. It was this custom, I think, which led those of later times also, although the two professions had now become distinct, nevertheless either to retain or to introduce certain kinds of exercises suited to the training of orators, such as problems, paraphrases, addresses, character sketches and similar things; doubtless that they might not turn over their pupils to the rhetoricians wholly ignorant and unprepared. But I observe that such instruction is now given up, because of the lack of application and the youth of some of the pupils; for I do not believe that it is because the subjects are underrated. I remember that at any rate when I was a young man, one of these teachers, Princeps by name, used to declaim and engage in discussion on alternate days; and that sometimes he would give instruction in the morning, and in the afternoon remove his desk and declaim. I used to hear, too, that within the memory of our forefathers some passed directly from the grammar school to the Forum and took their place among the most eminent advocates. (On Grammarians, iv)

Another writer who provides evidence on the Roman attitudes towards language is Aulus Gellius in his Attic Nights. Gellius represents the aristocrat's conviction that what he himself does must be right coupled with the conservative attitude that older practice is to be preferred:

Valerius Probus was once asked, as I learned from one of his friends, whether one ought to say has urbis or has urbes and hanc turrem or hanc turrim. "If," he replied, "you are either composing verse or writing prose and have to use those words, pay no attention to the musty, fusty rules of the grammarians, but consult your own ear as to what is to be said in any given place. What it

favours will surely be the best." Then the one who had asked the question said: "What do you mean by 'consult my ear'?" and he told me that Probus answered: "Just as Vergil did his, when in different passages he has used *urbis* and *urbes*, following the taste and judgment of his ear. For in the first Georgic, which," said he, "I have read in a copy corrected by the poet's own hand, he wrote *urbis* with an i. . . .

But turn and change it so as to read urbes, and somehow you will make it duller and heavier. On the other hand, in the third Aeneid he wrote urbes with an e: . . .

Change this too so as to read *urbis* and the word will be too slender and colourless, so great indeed is the different effect of combination in the harmony of neighbouring sounds. . . .

These words have, I think, a more agreeable lightness than if you should use the form in e in both places." But the one who had asked the question, a boorish fellow surely and with untrained ear, said: "I don't just understand why you say that one form is better and more correct in one place and the other in the other." Then Probus, now somewhat impatient, retorted: "Don't trouble then to inquire whether you ought to say urbis or urbes. For since you are the kind of man that I see you are and err without detriment to yourself, you will lose nothing whichever you say." (XIII, xxi, 3-8)

And his attitude towards grammarians is expressed quite as explicitly in this passage:

Within my memory Aelius Melissus held the highest rank among the grammarians of his day at Rome; but in literary criticism he showed greater boastfulness and sophistry than real merit. Besides many other works which he wrote, he made a book which at the time when it was issued seemed to be one of remarkable learning. The title of the book was designed to be especially attractive to readers, for it was called On Correctness in Speech. Who, then would suppose that he could speak correctly or with

propriety unless he had learned those rules of Melissus?

From that book I take these words: "Matrona, 'a matron,' is a woman who has given birth once; she who has done so more than once is called mater familias, 'mother of a family'; just so a sow which has had one litter is called porcetra; one which has had more, scrofa." But to decide whether Melissus thought out this distinction between matrona and mater familias and that it was his own conjecture, or whether he read what someone else had written, surely requires soothsayers. For with regard to porcetra he has, it is true, the authority of Pomponius in the Atellan farce which bears that very title; but that "matron" was applied only to a woman who had given birth once, and "mother of the family" only to one who had done so more than once, can be proved by the authority of no ancient writer. . . . (XVIII, vi. 1-7)

By the Middle Ages the aristocrats were unlikely to have had much education, and the classical heritage was perpetuated by the grammarians, whose dogmatic victory was complete. Donatus (fl. 400) and Priscian (fl. 500) are the dominating figures. The name of the first, shortened to Donat or Donet, became synonymous with 'grammar' or 'lesson' in Old French and Middle English, and the grammar of the second survives in over a thousand manuscripts.6 He also has the distinction of being consigned to Hell by Dante (Inferno, 15:110).

As an example of Priscian, here is the beginning of an analysis of the Aeneidthis is not from his big grammar, which was in eighteen books, but from a smaller one, Partitiones Duodecim Versuum Aeneidos Principalium:

Scan the verse. Arma vi/rumque ca/no Tro/iae qui/primus ab/oris. How many caesuras does it have? Two. What are they? Semiquinaria (penthemimeral) and semiseptenaria (hephthemimeral). How? The semiquinaria is arma virumque cano

And this is not the end of the catechism on the opening line of Virgil. Evidently this sort of drill was to accompany the study of the poem from beginning to end, if the end was ever reached.

Increasingly in the Middle Ages the written heritage of Greece and Rome was accepted unquestioningly because literate men did not have a cultural background which would permit them to ask pertinent questions. We learn, for example, that one of the best sources for the text of Diogenes Laertius is a manuscript of about 1200 written by a scribe "who obviously knew no Greek."8 To be sure, there were sometimes conflicts between the Christian heritage and the classical, usually resolved in favor of the Christian. In a medieval manuscript is this comment: "Concerning the words scala (step), and scopa (broom), we do not follow Donatus and the others who claim they are plural because we know that the Holy Ghost has ruled that they are

'Heinrich Keil, Grammatici Latini (Leipzig, 1859), vol. 3, p. 459.

and the semiseptenaria is arma virumque cano Troiae. How many figures arethere? Ten. For what reason? Because it consists of three dactyls and two spondees. How many parts of speech has this verse? Nine. How many nouns? Six: arma, virum, Troiae, qui, primus, oris. How many verbs? One: cano. How many prepositions? One: ab. How many conjunctions? One, que. Discuss each word; arma, what part of speech is it? Noun. Of what sort? Appelative (or common). What is its species? General. Its gender? Neuter. Why neuter? Because all nouns which end in a in the plural are unquestionably of neuter gender. Why is the singular not used? Because this noun signifies many and various things. . . . \*

John Edwin Sandys, A History of Classical Scholarship (Cambridge, 1920), vol. 1, p. 230, note; p. 274.

Diogenes Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers, with an English translation by R. D. Hicks (Loeb Classical Library) (Cambridge & London, 1925), vol. 1, p. xxxv. (The quotations from Suetonius, Varro, Quintilian, and Aulus Gellius are from the translations in the Loeb Classical Library editions.)

singular." And it was comforting when the traditions of classical grammar could be given divine corroboration. For example: "The verb has three persons, This I hold to be divinely inspired, for our belief in the Trinity is thereby manifested in words." Or this: "Some maintain that there are more, some that there are fewer parts of speech. But the world-encircling church has only eight offices [Presumably Ostiariat, Lektorat, Exorzistat, Akolythat, Subdiakonat, Diakonat, Presbyterat, Episkopat]. I am convinced that this is through divine inspiration. Since it is through Latin that those who are chosen come most quickly to a knowledge of the Trinity and under its guidance find their way along the royal road into their heavenly home, it was necessary that the Latin language should be created with eight parts of speech."9

On the other hand, St. Boniface's (675-754) "sense of grammatical accuracy was so deeply shocked when he heard an ignorant priest administering the rite of baptism in nomine Patria et Filia et Spiritus sancti [that is, with complete disregard of the required case endings] that he almost doubted the

validity of the rite."10

Up to about the twelfth century
Donatus and Priscian, whose grammars
were based ultimately on classical Latin,
were followed unquestioningly except
where there seemed to be a conflict with
sacred texts. The Vulgate and various
theological writings were in a later Latin
which might disagree with classical
grammar, as in the more frequent use
of the personal pronouns.11

But in the twelfth century the reintroduction of Greek philosophy had a tremendous impact on medieval thought, as is best illustrated by the Aristotelianism of Aquinas. And St. Thomas, as might be expected, deals with philological matters in the Summa Theologica, and again as might be expected through the syllogism:

It seems that in Holy Writ a word cannot have several senses, historical or literal, allegorical, tropological or moral, and anagogical. For many different senses in one text produce confusion and deception and destroy all force of argument. Hence no argument, but only fallacies, can be deduced from a multiplicity of propositions. But Holy Writ ought to be able to state the truth without any fallacy. Therefore in it there cannot be several senses to a word. (First Part, Question One, Article 10, Objection 1)

A more explicitly grammatical example is this one from the thirteenth century:

For a complete sentence, two things are necessary, namely a subject and a predicate. The subject is that which is being discussed; it is what determines the person of the verb. The predicate is that which is expressed by the subject. Nouns were invented to provide subjects. . . . Verbs were invented to provide predicates.

This concept of grammar being something created is found in another thirteenth-century writer:

Was he who invented grammar a grammarian? No, because the creation of grammar cannot be based on teaching since that would presuppose its existence. Grammar was invented. For the invention of grammar must precede grammar, So it was not the grammarian but the philosopher who created grammar, for the philosopher studies the nature of things and recognizes their essential qualities.<sup>12</sup>

The authority of the grammarian was occasionally challenged. In a seventeenth-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>J. J. Baebler, Beiträge zu einer Geschichte ler lateinischen Grammatik im Mittelalter, (Halle a. S., 1885), p. 22/Hans Arens, Sprachwissenschaft, der Gang ihrer Entwicklung von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart (Munich, 1955), pp. 30, 31.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Sandys, p. 469.
"Baebler, p. 22.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>Arens, pp. 34, 32.

century German satirical treatment of schoolmasters is this account of a fifteenth-century episode:

The Emperor Sigismund came to the Council of Constance and said: "Videte patres, ut eradicetis schismam Hussi-tarium." There sat an old Bohemiam pedant in the Council who was convinced that with this box on the ear to Priscian the Emperor had sinned against the Catholic Church as gravely as had John Hus and Hieronymus of Prague. So he said [in Latin]: Most Serene Highness, schisma is neuter gender." The emperor said [in German]: "How do you know that?" The old Bohemian pedant answered [now in German]: "Alexander Gallus says so." The emperor said: "Who is Alexander Gallus?" The Bohemian pedant answered: "He is a monk." "Yes," said Sigismund, "I am the Roman emperor, and my word is worth at least that of a monk." (Joh. Balthaser Schupp, Der Teutsche Schulmeister, 1663) 18

It now remains to consider the transfer of these attitudes to the modern vernacular languages. But first a brief review of the three preceding stages. The first is the unique situation in Greece, which differed from that of any of the succeeding cultures in two significant ways: It was essentially a monolingual society, and at least during the period of its greatest intellectual and artistic achievement it knew nothing of formal grammar. Rome differed in both essentials. The cultivated Roman was educated in Greek, and formal grammar was a part of his Latin education, though this does not mean that he learned Greek through formal grammar. In the Middle Ages the two-language requirement for the educated, which was characteristic of Rome, was continued, but with an important difference. Whereas for the Roman, Latin was a respectable language with a respectable literature, for the educated man of the Middle Ages his native vernacular was not respectable and at least at first had no important literature. Also he learned the language of scholarship and literature in a way quite different from that used by the Roman. He learned it with the aid of formal grammar.

Of these three stages, the third, the medieval, is much the longest; in formal education and scholarship it lasts well into the eighteenth century and therefore has a duration of well over a thousand years. Of course during the last two or three hundred of those years a great change had come over Europe, due partly to an intimate reacquaintance with the heritage of Greece and Rome. But in the field of philology this meant largely a return to the attitudes of the ancients. It also meant the transference of the whole philological approachancient and medieval-to the modern vernacular languages.

The history of vernacular grammars and of English grammars in particular comes next in this development, but there

is no space for it here.

One consequence of this transfer must be illustrated: The ambivalence it has given us toward language. Here are some examples. Trollope in his *Autobiography* writes:

The ordinary talk of ordinary people is carried on in short sharp expressive sentences, which very frequently are never completed,-the language of which even among educated people is often incorrect. The novel-writer in constructing his dialogue must so steer between absolute accuracy of language-which would give to his conversation an air of pedantry, and the slovenly inaccuracy of ordinary talkers, which if closely followed would offend by an appearance of grimace-as to produce upon the ear of his readers a sense of reality. If he be quite real he will seem to attempt to be funny. If he be quite correct he will seem to be unreal.14

The nineteenth-century German phi-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>Baebler, p. 118.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Anthony Trollope, An Autobiography (World's Classics, Oxford, 1953), p. 206.

lologist Wilhelm Scherer, discussing the great dramatist Heinrich Kleist, remarks that "he did distinguished work in all forms. There dwells in his language an individual magic, though he has an uncertain control of German grammar." And in a recent review in the TLS is this sentence: "He [Leonard Clark] died after completing the first draft of his book, Yucatan Adventure, which would have gained some grammar, while losing some of the punch of its author's virile enthusiasm, if it had been more carefully revised." 16

In a detective story, Rex Stout has Archie Goodwin make this comment after one of the principal characters has said, "Yes. . . . We shall see.":

But what really settled it was her saying, "We shall see." He [Nero Wolfe] will always stretch a point, within reason, for people who use words as he thinks they should be used.17

But in another story Wolfe is made to say, "If it's her again. . ."18

And Mark Twain, who took Cooper severely to task for his "ungrammatical" English did what was perhaps his best work, in *Huckleberry Finn*, by using

a narrative device which relieved him of all responsibility for conforming to standard usage.

One of the most eloquent and emphatic in condemnation of the Latin grammatical tradition was Macaulay but, as you might guess, he is much too long

to quote here.19

In conclude by returning to the four senses of the term grammar outlined at the beginning. Contemporary philologists who specialize in linguistics have, it seems to me, attempted to strip away the accretions of two thousand years and are turning to a rigorously descriptive approach, the seeds of which are to be found in the Greeks. Other philologists have other interests, such as literary history, literary criticism, and, of course, the problem of getting freshmen to write better. As an inescapable burden of their academic heritage, they have to bear the weight of the ancient and medieval grammatical tradition, which survives in the other two senses, prescriptive grammar and grammar as remedy. What I have tried to do is to give some account of how that tradition developed, how it was transmitted, and why much of it is essentially irrelevant to the problems the philologist faces today.20

p. 156.

pp. 631-634.

<sup>26</sup>A somewhat shorter version of this paper was read to the Northeastern Ohio College English Group, Akron, 5 November 1960.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>Wilhelm Scherer, Geschichte der deutschen Literatur (Knaur, Berlin, n. d.), p. 752. <sup>18</sup>Times Literary Supplement, March 20, 1959,

<sup>&</sup>quot;Rex Stout, "Murder Is No Joke," And Four to Go, A Nero Wolfe Foursome (Viking, New York, 1958), p. 155.

York, 1958), p. 155.

"Rex Stout, "Too Many Women," All Aces, A Nero Wolfe Omnibus (Viking, New York, 1958), p. 237.

<sup>\*</sup>T. B. Macaulay, "The London University", Edinburgh Review, February, 1826, in Critical, Historical and Miscellaneous Essays and Poems (Porter and Coats, Philadelphia, n. d.), vol. 3, np. 631-634.

# Linguistic Principles For Interpreting Meaning

ARCHIBALD A. HILL

There is a dilemma which has always faced linguists. That it faces us now is nothing unusual. What is unusual is that it is harder than ever to escape from it. The dilemma is that anything we-or for that matter, anyone-may say about language is likely to be either controversial or trivial. With much of the results of structural linguistics under determined attack from the transformationists, the area of what is now in some sense controversial has so increased as even to include some statements that would previously have seemed safe because bromidically trivial. Under the circumstances, then, I can hardly hope to escape both horns of the dilemma; I can only try. For what it is worth I should add once and for all that I would far rather be gored by the controversial horn, than further flattened by the triv-

If there is hope for escape, it lies only in operating in an area of linguistics which is not yet overpopulated by scholars and scholarly belligerence. This area is semantic analysis, and that is therefore the area I have chosen. To be able to say at least a few things about meaning is a peculiar pleasure, further, in that neglect of meaning is probably the oldest and most frequent charge made against modern linguists and linguistics. What I shall try to do is to describe some of the current techniques of investigating meaning, and give a few of their results, in the hope that both may be of value to a group which, as teachers of language arts as well as science, must always be concerned with meaning.

There are, first of all, many ways of describing and defining meaning. Perhaps the most general is to say that meaning is partial predictability. That is, any item which is totally predictable is totally redundant, and so meaningless. If an item is totally unpredictable, that is the same thing as saying that it does not belong to the signalling system at all, and so is also meaningless. Such a description is of use in various ways, such as showing that individual sounds or phonemes have partial predictability, and so some share in meaning, even though they have no concrete semantic content in the ordinary sense. Another broadly general description is to say that the meaning of any linguistic item is the sum total of linguistic contexts in which it may occur. This also is of use, and much semantic analysis concerns itself with this distributional type of study-as when a dictionary defines by giving illustrative sentences. Yet pressed to completeness, such a definition demands the impossible. If the number of English sentences is infinite, the contexts of any item are unmeasurable because no matter how many we gather. there will always be more.

There are at least two other types of meaning for linguistic items, and these are those with which we are necessarily most concerned in a practical world. The first of these can be called translation meaning. That is, the meaning of any item can be identified with the best linguistic substitute for it. The substitute may be in the original language, as when we say that "cranium" means "skull," or in another language as when we say "mensa" means "table." The substitute may be an item of quite different order, as when we substitute a phrase for a

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word, as in saying that "dream" means a "vision during sleep." Quite obviously, dictionary definitions are examples of translation meaning.

The last, and most basically important type of meaning can be called correspondence meaning. That is, any linguistic item has correspondence meaning if it can be shown that it corresponds to an item in the non-linguistic world. Further, this correspondence is the meaning of the linguistic item. That is, we can identify the meaning of a linguistic item like "dog," by referring to the animal.

These two kinds of meaning, for users of language, have always and properly constituted the heart of meaning, and the justification of language. Yet these two kinds of meaning have been avoided by linguists for reasons which were, once at least, compelling. For translation meaning, the difficulty lay in the nature of synonyms, on which that kind of meaning rests. It was regarded as a truism, accepted by all but the most naive, that there could be no synonyms which had exactly identical distributions. For instance, "cranium," though often defined by dictionaries as "skull," will not fit in all situations where "skull" occurs. We do not say "cranium and cross bones," nor would we call a lecture by a football coach "cranium practice." That is, a principle accepted by all is that there can be substitutes for items in individual contexts only-there can be no exact single substitutes or synonyms for all contexts. It seems somewhat strange that the undoubted fact that there can be no such universal substitutes should have led to the conclusion that there could be no satisfactory substitute in individual occurrences. Yet this conclusion seems to have been the linguists' usual attitude. Individual substitutes might not be exact, it is true, but they could still be satisfactory. Thus "canine" might be an inexact substitute for "dog," in "the dog wagged its tail," since substitution produces a sentence which is

probably not substitutable with the original in all situations and in all styles. Yet most of us would agree, by common sense, that the substitution is satisfactory. To insist otherwise, for long kept linguists from defining the meaning of such an item as "canine" by substituting "dog," the sort of substitution teachers have always used. And in this impasse, we did little enough about meaning of any sort.

It was thus a great service that Zellig Harris performed in a paper before the Linguistic Society of America.1 He demonstrated that there was a method which established satisfactory substitute meanings, even though they might not be exact. The method was to give a passage of normal language to a group of informants, separately. Each informant was to put down, in order, all the substitutes he could think of for some one item. Of all the substitutes named, the one which occurred highest on all lists was the "right" one. The peculiar neatness of the demonstration was that it tied in with the way we believe that the human brain works in interpreting meaning. That is, interpretation is a stochastic process, in which the human calculating machine-what Moulton has wittily called a machina ex deo-sorts out the interpretation which has the highest probability, and then treats this interpretation as if its probability were one hundred per cent. The most probable translation meaning, then, can similarly be taken to be right in the same stochastic fashion. It should be said that Harris' technique is not one which can be of practical use in writing definitions. Its importance lies, rather, in the fact that he has amply demonstrated that satisfactory translation meanings exist.

The difficulty over correspondence meaning was, in reality, a classic philo-

<sup>&#</sup>x27;See Z. S. Harris "Discourse Analysis," Language, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 10-11 (1952). Harris' published material contains only very partial reference to his oral discussion.

sophical difficulty. Linguists as practitioners of an empirical science (or nearscience) were naturally nominalist rather than realist in point of view. To them, therefore, the objects and events in the non-linguistic world seemed to be a continuum, in which it was impossible to draw sharp class lines. That is, the class table did not have real existence as a sharply bounded area, but shaded off into desks, pulpits, pedestals, and myriads of other things. In the absence of sharp dividing lines, non-linguistic objects offered no hope of the kind of segmentation into manageable quanta on which modern linguistics operates. Here also, then, linguists tended to be defeatists. I can well remember the late Edgar Sturtevant remarking that there could never be a scientific semantics for just the reasons that I have outlined.

In the field of correspondence meaning, as well as in that of translation meaning, the first progress was to show that satisfactory correspondence meanings were possible. Ultimately the suggestion came from the area of phonemics, and the suggestion is not the least of the valuable results which phonology has had for wider areas of linguistics. In the thirties and forties linguists clearly demonstrated that the sounds of lanwere arranged in patterns characterized by great (but always imperfect) symmetry. Since the symmetry of structure outweighed the irregularities, it proved to be possible to use the hypothesis of symmetry as a heuristic device for predicting items in the structure which had not yet been directly observed. In a presidential address before the Linguistic Society, Murray Emeneau cited the fact that some items in the nonlinguistic world could be shown to be arranged in symmetrical patterns, similar to the symmetrical arrangement of linguistic items like phonemes. When the nonlinguistic items, in turn, showed a onefor-one correspondence with a pattern of linguistic items, there could then be said to be a set of structural correspondence meanings, where position in the pattern resulted in segmentation in a way closely similar to the manner in which position in a pattern resulted in segmentation of the continuum of sounds into discrete and manageable phonemes. The classic example of this situation cited by Emeneau, was the correspondence of chemical terminology with the nonlinguistic structure of chemical compounds.3 Once again, the importance of the statement lay more in the demonstration that satisfactory correspondence meaning could be shown to exist, than in holding out the hope of identifying it for all linguistic items. Thus Trager, in his pamphlet on "The Field of Linguistics" stated a position parallel to the Emeneau suggestion, but pointed out that before we could hope to identify all correspondence meanings in this fashion, we should have to discover the structure of the whole of cultural activity-an endeavor not likely of immediate success.

These two endeavors have shown linguists that meaning is something capable of investigation. What have we done about it since? I submit that we have done a good deal, though our efforts have not been widely publicized. The first of these not widely heralded advances was in the formulation of the so-called Joos law, in measuring translation meanings. In the only printed form of this law, Martin Joos stated in a review in Language,4 that the substitute which contributed least to the total meaning of the context, was the best. The law needs a corollary which Joos did not specifically mention, but which was clearly implied. It is that in measuring the context to which the term under definition is to be fitted, a wider context

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>M. B. Emeneau, "Language and Non-Linguistice Patterns," *Language*, XXVI, pp. 201-03 (1950).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>a</sup>George L. Trager, SIL, Occasional Papers, I, p. 7 (1949).

<sup>a</sup>Language, XXXIV, p. 286 (1958).

always takes precedence over a narrower one.

It can be immediately recognized that Joos's formulation, with its reliance on maximum redundancy, describes what has always been the practice of lexicographers, and that even their mistakes demonstrate that they follow the Joos pattern. I remember reading a good many years ago, of an unfortunate foreign editor, who defined "jag" as an umbrella. He was counting the items in two lists, mostly identical. The first list contained "umbrella," but not "jag." The second contained "jag," but not "umbrella." Therefore, "jag" equalled "umbrella," and the two lists were identical. The fact that the conclusion was wrong is only an interesting illustration of the fact that in a world where nothing is certain, the soundest of methods can give bad results.

It is also true that the Ioos law is of the greatest importance to literary interpretation. There is one school of criticism-perhaps I should say pseudocriticism-which works in the exact reverse fashion. That is, the most vivid and aberrant translation is taken by these students to be the best. If it can be shown that such conclusions are in direct contradiction of universal human tendencies in interpretation, this maximal approach to translation meanings can be rejected, and relegated to the same pre-scientific limbo as that to which we have assigned the mediaeval habit of drawing semantic conclusions from multiple, and contradictory, etymologies. Thus to quote only two instances in which the Joos law applies, I can say that I have used it to dispose of the suggestion that in Frost's lines

Where had I heard this wind before Change like this to a deeper roar?

the poet was referring to a lion. Similarly, I believe that the Joos law also disposes once for all of the crux that too respectful editors have made of Hamlet's "sea of troubles." The most redundant substitute is simply "a lot of troubles."

Beyond the Joos law, there have been two main further forays into the still unmapped semantic area. The first was by Joos himself. In an article in SIL5 he described his experiment in assembling a fairly large range of quotations (drawn from miscellaneous sources) for the word code. Joos discovered that the carded set of quotations grouped themselves readily into piles, and that if each pile was identified with a suitable translation meaning as a sort of ticket, the sum total of piles displayed a surprising symmetry, sufficient to make prediction possible. In short, Joos was working mainly with translation meaning, which is necessarily intra- rather than extralinguistic. His discovery is that meanings, even when measured altogether within the framework of language, possess pattern and symmetry strikingly like the pattern and symmetry of (once more) the arrangement of phonemes. The ultimate implication of such a discovery is that the structural correspondence meaning suggested by Emeneau can, in future, be investigated by starting within language, instead of starting outside language and working in, as Emeneau and Trager had necessarily assumed. Yet though Joos's paper suggests extremely important future research, it should be pointed out that much more work will be needed before the research bears full fruit. Thus what he succeeded in demonstrating was that illustrative quotationstypical contexts-for one item showed symmetrical structure. It is a fair hypothesis to assume that other items will also show structure. It is not yet demonstrated that they will show structure at all similar in details to the structure of distribution for code. One product of the Joos discovery is that he has formulated a new way of grouping the sub-entries in a dictionary. Up to now, the principal

<sup>&</sup>quot;Semology: A Linguistic Theory of Meaning," SIL, XIII, pp. 53-70 (1958).

way of grouping entries in an orderly fashion has been historical. If not historical, the fashion has been an arbitrary mixture of importance and semantic closeness. But beyond this result of the Joos study is the contribution to the investigation of meaning itself. Once the investigator is able to look at his quotations and translations and say that there is a hole in, say, the upper right hand corner of his diagram, he is in a position to produce results as stimulating as those produced by the phonologist in the thirties.

The Joos discovery can be described as translation meaning with important implications for structural correspondence meaning. In some of my own work I have dealt with some aspects of structural correspondence meaning with implications for translation meaning. In an article in the Texas Studies in Literature and Language, I took up the characteristics of structural parallels, as they bear on semantic interpretation. I need not here elaborate the mathematical treatment of probabilities which was involved, but the central notion was that parallels show an extremely sharp rise in probability of being meaningful (as opposed to the results of chance and coincidence) when it can be shown that we have not only parallel items, but items in parallel order. In this situation, then, the crucial number of items in a suspected parallel is three, since it requires three to establish significant order. Here I can give only a hurried summary of the material I have presented fully elsewhere. Yet I think the importance of these theories is great for literary criticism, and can be stated (in relation to the Joos law) in the form of a simple principle of semantic interpretation, whether the interpretation be directed towards literature, or to language of any sort.

The principle is that in dealing with possible metaphors, any metaphor which

"Principles Governing Semantic Parallels," I, pp. 356-65 (1959).

is an isolated item is to be thought of as "dead," and so to be translated with maximum redundancy. Thus, if it is said that the ship "plows through the waves," it is reasonable to take "plow" isolated as it is, as only a synonym for "move." On the other hand, as soon as there is structural correspondence, the metaphor is to be recognized as an integral part of the design of the utterance. Thus when Shakespeare writes

Care keeps his watch in every old man's

And where care lodges, sleep will never lie

(Romeo and Juliet, II, iii, 35-6)

there is an elaborate correspondence; eye is to mind as window is to house, care is to eye as watcher is to window, care is to mind as lodger is to house, sleep is to mind as second lodger is to house. The correspondence is not perhaps strictly in chronological order, but certainly nearly so, since we have the order watches, lodges, drives out second lodger, corresponding to care awakened, taking over, and driving away sleep. There can be no doubt, I think, that Shakespeare has made an organic comparison of the human mind and a house in which one lives. In general, I should not apply these principles to similes, since when the speaker or writer says "x is like y," the statement is overt evidence of the comparison. Nor will the method described here enable the student to be right all of the time. There is no such principle in any form of science, or for that matter, in any human activity. The method

<sup>&#</sup>x27;A contrary opinion of such a possible metaphor as "the ship ploughs the waves" is found ably discussed in Christine Brooke-Rose, A Grammar of Metaphor, London (1958) pp. 206-208. Miss Brooke-Rose accepts the idea that this metaphor is living on the ground that it involves a genuine analogy with at least four terms.

The type of analogy she rejects is that found in "the arrow flew," where it can be said "the arrow is to the air as a bird is to the air." That is, there are only three terms, not four.

will, on the other hand, enable the student to be right more of the time than he is wrong, or so I hope. Such a result is all that we can expect in a world governed by inexorable probabilities, rather than inexorable laws.

While the approaches to semantics that I have been describing are probably more useful to literary study than to composition, there are also approaches which are useful to the study and teaching of composition. Primarily these two techniques are no more than extensions of a technique which has been known and valued for at least a generation-the pair test. The two extended uses can be called the relational pair test, and the referential identity test. Before I describe them, however, I will give a little necessary background material. The pair test has usually been practiced in phonology, and it is a commonplace that it is the foundation for the whole of phonemics. In its most obvious form it consists in putting pairs like bat and bad, or bat and pat before an informant, and asking him whether they are the same or different. It is worth pointing out that when practiced in this rather simple fashion, the results are not by any means always clear-cut. For instance, a colleague has pointed out to me that he has often enough had the experience of finding informants who differentiated horse and boarse, but were unable to give a firm answer that the forms were different, as they would have been expected to do in classic phonemic theory. The explanation seems to be that distinctions, however real, which bear little functional load in differentiating meaningful forms, are apt to be difficult for the average expert speaker. There is a far less naive use which can be made of the phonological pair test, but it is surprising that it is not very commonly practiced. This is to set the test up as a recognition test. The most extensive use of it that I happen to know is in an elaborate experiment performed and reported by Ilse

Lehiste. She presented contrasts like plum pie vs. plump eye to juries of as many as forty native speakers of English, The tests had been recorded (again by native speakers) and arranged in random order. Since the jury was able to distinguish one utterance from the other with what was practical unanimity, the test clearly disposed once and for all of the idea that the phenomenon of juncture is merely grammatical, and is not something that can be heard.

It is also true that many linguists have long used something called "differential meaning" as a basis for phonological distinctions. Thus /b/ and /p/ are said to be different phonemes because such forms as bat and bad are different in meaning from pat and pad. The theory is that informants should be able to state that two forms are the same or different in meaning without hesitation, and that such a statement does not require the informant to identify the meaning of either form. I hasten to say that I accept this theory, and like others, base much of my phonology on differential meaning. What is surprising is that linguists have not devised testing methods for differential meaning which go beyond asking informants whether sentences containing sounds suspected of being minimally different are examples of the same sentence, or of two differing sentences. That is, the typical pair test is repetition of two such utterances as

"I gave it a bat." and "I gave it a pat."
There is obviously nothing wrong with such tests. However, though they are based on differential meaning, the interesting fact is that they throw light only on phonology, not on differential meaning itself.

Yet it is possible to design and use pair tests which tell us at least something more than just that bat and pat are pre-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>"An Acoustic-Phonetic Study of Internal Open Juncture," *Phonetica*, V, Supplement, pp. 17-19 (1960).

sumably different words. One whole area of correspondence meaning is that in which a given linguistic item is used to refer sometimes to the same object more than once, and sometimes to differing objects. Obviously, therefore, whether or not a noun like man occurring twice or more in an utterance refers to the same individual, or to different individuals, is a matter of differential meaning, though of a different sort from that involved in saying that bat is different from pat. Deciding about two occurrences of man is, strictly speaking, both differential and correspondence meaning, whereas the bat vs. pat opposition is merely differential.

It is therefore interesting to point out that a pair test can be designed for such meanings,

"I went to town and met a man who was an old friend.

I took him to dinner, because a man has to be nice to his old friends."

If such a sentence is presented to native informants, the question "do the two occurrences of a man mean the same or different persons?" the response is quite as firmly unanimous as any response to questions about bat and pat. And as long as convergence is thus easily securable, I see nothing wrong in making use of it.

The test does not, perhaps, seem to have given very startling results, on first examination. Yet I think that its implications are considerable. First, from the point of view of theory, such a test is a first attempt to draw a cutting line in the field of correspondence meaning, and therefore at least demonstrates the ultimate possibility of chopping the semantic continuum. In a practical way, even in the rather trivial example here given, the test will enable us to make what can be termed speaker's predictions about the occurrence of items like the indefinite and definite article, since one occurs when the correspondence meaning is different from any previous occurrence,

the other when the correspondence meaning is the same as the last previous reference. Conversely, of course, we can make hearer's predictions, interpreting the reference of the noun in accord with the occurrence of the articles. In either case we are describing the range of partial predictability and so increasing

the knowledge of meaning.

More important than this simple type of referential test, is what can be called the relational pair test. Transformational analysts have often insisted that every native speaker recognizes automatically and in a fashion relatively uniform with the reactions of others, whether a sentence is grammatical or not. In another connection I have pointed out difficulties in this theory, even though it is obviously true that there must be some kind of commonly recognized limits on the sentences a speaker can create, else we would all talk nonsense. But though isolated sentences do not bring forth the unanimous response claimed for them, it is my experience that when suspected sentences are set in a proper relational frame, convergent and therefore useful responses can be secured. One such sentence, originally suggested by Professor Anna Granville Hatcher, and discussed rather inconclusively at the Third Texas Conference on Problems of Analysis in English will illustrate. The original question had been, is "Her lips were bitten by her," an ungrammatical sentence? When I tried it in this fashion on a set of informants, the usual response was one of uncertainty. The same was true for "Her lips were bitten by Mary." But when I put the sentence in a relational frame the response was quite different. My sentences were

I. A. A mosquito bit her cheek.

B. Her cheek was bitten by a mosquito.

II. A. Mary bit her lips.

B. Her lips were bitten by Mary.

The question asked was as follows.

"There is a relationship between I A and I B. Is the relationship between II A and II B the same as that between I A and I B, or is it different?"

To this question I got ten responses, all that the relationship was different. The most interesting one of these replies was the last, where in conversation after the response had been given, the informant said, "Oh I see, in II B her refers to somebody else than Mary." That is, he had made his response without directly relying on meaning. The response is enough to tell us that the passive transform is not applicable to the original sentence, since it does not produce the same relationship between active and passive as is found in sentences where the applicability of the passive transform is unquestioned. Note, however, that it does not tell us why. To find the reason why the passive transform seems queer for this sentence, would require, I believe, investigation of the referential meaning of Mary and her, probably by asking whether the two forms had the same or a different refer-

I find these results clarifying, in several ways. First, transformational analysts are apt to claim that statements of transformational derivation are purely formal, and have nothing to do with meaning. It seems to me that such sentences as "Mary bit her lips" suggest very strongly that transformational operations are applicable, or not applicable, in accord

with correspondence meaning and though often formal, are not purely so. Second, though transformational operations may require us to make use of meaning, I see nothing terrifying in this as long as we make a serious effort to design behavioristically based tests for the control of meaning.

Finally, the relation of transformational analysis, so-called, to meaning suggests to me something strikingly different in this activity from that which has more traditionally been carried on by linguists. Transformational study is an operational procedure, and one which is quite different from the segmenting, classifying, and cataloguing activities of phonemic, morphemic, and syntactic analysis of sentences. This latter analysis has as its purpose an orderly approach to meaning through description of the signals which carry it. Transformational study requires that meaning be previously identified, and then states relationships between meaningful utterances. Without transformational study, traditional linguistics will remain incomplete. Without traditional linguistics, transformational study will be insecurely based. When both are developed into a harmonious whole, teachers of the language arts will have a science which describes for them the nature of language signals, and the operations by which they can be manipulated.

### Dictionaries and Linguistics

HARRY R. WARFEL

Ever since 1828, when Noah Webster published the world's first dictionary

Professor Warfel (University of Florida) writes that he has been working at the mathematical principles underlying the operation of language and has developed a new philosophical basis for grammatical study.

based upon scientific principles, American dictionaries have kept abreast of the theories and researches in linguistics. Like monuments stand the old Century and the superseded volumes of the Merriam-Webster unabridged dictionary. They never can be discarded. We return

to them to interpret the literature of their day. Yet always we greet the latest work with confidence, knowing that both unabridged and desk dictionaries will reflect the ultimate in scholarship. One of the glories of American intellectual achievement, one that is too seldom given recognition, is the patient, painstaking, dedicated toil that provides us with these admirable handbooks to language, the instrument that makes us human.

Lying behind each of these great dictionaries is a philosophy of language that determines a great many decisions. Partly because Clarence Barnhart and Edward Artin have presented fascinating discussions of linguistic problems and practical solutions, I should like to raise a few questions about fundamental presuppositions. I realize that metaphysics is not a popular subject nowadays. Yet it is only by examining our unprovable assumptions that somehow we make progress. What we are and what we do are more rigidly regulated by these beliefs than we realize.

T

Samuel Johnson apparently had no scholarly interest in the problem of the origin of language. In his Preface, Introduction, and Definitions he did not allude to, and I assume that he took for granted, the traditional Christian view of the supernatural grant of language. Noah Webster was made of different stuff. He accepted nothing without rigorous examination. Conversion to Congregationalist Calvinism led him to a dynamic faith in the literal veracity of the Bible. He believed, as told in Genesis, that God spoke to Adam and thus gave Adam "language as well as the faculty of speech" as an "immediate gift." After the Fall "Adam and Eve both replied to their Maker, and excused their disobedience." Their possession of language was undoubted; as the parents of mankind they transmitted this language to their descendants. The dispersion of the human family after the Flood led to the formation of the several families of languages; these developed differently as a result of the great changes incident to the increase of knowledge and to men's different social circumstances. The inescapable conclusions, Webster thought, were that there was one original language and that from this original descended into all others "many of the primitive radical words." It was his belief, therefore, that Saxon, Danish, and Welsh words-the basic rootstock of English-"are of equal antiquity with the Chaldee and Syriac." The tracing of kinship, therefore, served as a means of proving the survival of Adam's words.

This belief supplied the motive power that led Noah Webster to invent the science of etymology. To combat the the notions of the Deists and others who denied the literal truth of the Bible, Webster set out to trace the history of words through twenty languages. If he could demonstrate the persistence of Adamic words in modern languages, to that extent he would refute the notions of the unbelievers. In fulfilling his purpose Webster created the formula which has been adopted by all succeeding etymologists. Whereas Dr. Johnson traced the preposition by only to Saxon bi and big, Webster brought together "Saxon be or big; Swedish and Danish be; Dutch by; German bei; all contracted from big." He added that "The Swedish and Danish paa, and Russian po, may be from a different root, although they are nearly allied in signification, and may be the same word differently written. This preposition occurs as a prefix in all Shemitic languages, contracted indeed into beth."

Dr. Johnson gave the etymology of father as the Saxon faether. He added: "This word is likewise found in the Persian language." Webster traced the word in Saxon, German, Dutch, Icelandic, Danish, Greek, Latin, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, French, Persian, Russian,

Sanskrit, Bali, Zend, and Syrian. With perceptiveness he added, "The Gothic atta, Irish aithir or athair, Basque aita, must be from a different root, unless the first letter has been lost."

The point I stress is that Webster's etymologizing had a purpose that has been lost today. Twentieth-century dictionaries reject Webster's thesis. In Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition (1934), the etymologies are justified as "a record of the origin and development that is of value and interest for its own sake as well as necessary to a full understanding of the word itself"(xiii). Kemp Malone, etymology editor of The American College Dictionary, states: "In sum, the etymologies here set down present, in succinct form, the fruits of scholarly research, old and new, on the origins of English words" (xxiii). Webster's New World Dictionary states that "Dr. Whitehall and Dr. Umbach, who were in charge of the etymological research for this dictionary, have related the etymologies to the definitions in such a way that the 'semantic flow' of the word-its evolution from earlier forms and its sense development-as well as its kinship to other words in English and related languages, is immediately made clear."

It is obvious that there is a wholly different attitude in these three books from that taken by Webster. The New Internation Views etymology as disinterested yet useful knowledge. ACD considers etymology a scientific enterprise. NWD makes etymology a basis for understanding the changes in meaning which many words have undergone. The key thought in all seems to be that language must be viewed objectively, dispassionately in line with a positivist philosophy.

The question I now raise is whether the editors of our dictionaries must not discover a different principle upon which to formulate and present etymological knowledge. Facts are inert, especially

when they are presented solely as facts. Principles, as Webster demonstrated, are dynamic. My own feeling is that the New World Dictionary made a breakthrough toward a satisfactory approach. The editors were right in placing the needs of the reader first. The suspicion lingers that etymology has been a fencedoff scholarly playground inaccessible to the common reader. Possibly the unabridged dictionaries should continue to present detailed etymologies. But I question the utility of etymologies in desk dictionaries that do not make these entries of value in giving the reader a grasp of the primary sense of a word and in helping him to understand the meanings that radiate therefrom. Or to state the problem differently, if Noah Webster's reason for linking English words with all other languages has no validity, a new theory of etymology and a new mode of presentation must be found that is tenable for our generation.

#### II

A presupposition of Dr. Johnson seems to remain unquestioned in some recent dictionaries. It is that vocabulary and language are synonymous. He wrote: "Our language, for almost a century, has . . been departing from its original Teutonick character, and deviating towards a Gallic structure and phraseology, from which it ought to be our endeavour to recall it." The fact is that the system of English has been so powerful that the addition of many thousands of foreign words has not affected the structure of the language at all. Every foreign verb, adjective, and adverb operates on the English plan. Only a few dozen foreign nouns retain their original plurals. A parallel to this tenacity in syntax is the tenacity of pronunciation in this country. Despite the arrival of millions of immigrants to the United States between 1890 and 1924, the children and grandchildren of those immigrants today speak the same brand of English as do their neighbors

whose original arrival in this country from England may date from 1620 or 1700 or 1800. Vocabulary is like the players in a football game. No matter how many different players temporarily enter the game, the rules of the game remain the same. Vocabulary happens to be, like the stars in a football game, more newsworthy than the system, but

the system is dominant.

Professor Kittredge in The New International (1934; p. lxxxvi) glimpsed this fact but did not know what to do with it. As a consequence he made a distinction between foreign and native words. He wrote: "The words which belong more to the grammar than to the lexicon . . . are almost wholly native . . . . The substantial elements of the proposition, nouns, adjectives, verbs, may all be obtained from abroad, but the connecting links, which must unite them in the framework of sentences, can be found only at home." The same inability to escape from word origins doubtless led Porter Perrin to assert that the Latin derivative prior to is heavier than the native before. I do not know the kind of scale which Perrin used, but apparently it was the same one employed by Dr. Johnson. Certainly such a distinction, arising from one of the major dogmas of usage study, is unscientific and indefensible. The truth is that all words adopted into English have the same weight as native words; the test is not one of origin but of utility. All that we know about usage study, therefore, requires us to place the system ahead of the vocabulary.

The new science of communication theory discriminates the terms channel, code, and message. In speech the channel is the speech tract, the code is the system of sounds and patterns produced by the channel, and the message is the set of ideas transmitted by employing vocabulary in the code. The limited nature of the channel is apparent when we use speech in a dark room. Facial expression

and gestures are thus eliminated. The basic code of vocal signals can now be analyzed. Quickly it is discovered that vocabulary is subordinate to the code. The sound signals, intonational patterns, and syntax-operating together-form the code. The derived code of writing can use a typewriter with as few as thirty keys to transcribe every message that can be devised in the English language. As soon as we realize that language is a system containing a small number of items, the code and the structure of that code take precedence in our thinking over the message, over the vocabulary.

#### Ш

A corollary to the philosophical view that the system is more important than the vocabulary is the idea that the basic explanation of language must come at the structural level. In the past decade it has been discovered that in English there are fourteen basic statement-sentence patterns and four or five minor patterns. All question and command patterns and all clause patterns are modifications of these. These sentence patterns have their origin in fixed positional arrangements of the four major word-classes. By the mathematical principle of functionality every position in basic sentences can be filled by members of the other wordclasses and by word-groups. A wordclass supplies the constant in a position, and the other word-classes and wordgroups supply the variables. What has hitherto seemed to be very complicated is now quite as simple as first-year highschool algebra, as Donald J. Lloyd and I demonstrated in American English in Its Culural Setting (1956). The old and very narrow concept of functional change must now be superseded by the overriding concept of functionality. Basic sentences are not sequences of members of word-classes but of func-

As soon as the concept of functional-

ity is accepted, it will become apparent that the old principles of word-order must be reorganized to embrace the notions of fixity in word-groups and of relative variability in the order of the functions. A noun-group like "the boy" and a prepositional phrase like "at dinner" must always have this sequence. Any number of additional words can be inserted between the and boy or between at and dinner. The permuted nature of these groups is absolute in standard English. When these groups are put into a sentence like "The boy is at dinner," it becomes obvious that the sentence can be stated "At dinner is the boy" and "The boy at dinner is." No matter how long the sequence in any function, inverted order requires the shifting of the group. It become immediately apparent that attempts to explain English word-order in contrast with Latin word-order must seem wrong unless the mathematical principle in English order is explained.

The recent discoveries in language operation make clear the conclusion that all languages operate on the same principles. All have a small number of phonemes that combine systematically to form morphemes, words, and sentences. All languages have a small number of basic sentence patterns with their own intonational patterns. All languages have the principles of modification, word order, apposition, and compounding. The extent to which languages have inflection and/or composition as devices to show number, case, person, tense, mode, voice, aspect, and other grammatical ideas may vary, but that every language has harmonious systematic manipulations is quite evident. Every language apparently employs the mathematical principles of permutations, combinations, and functionality. No language, therefore, is a unique manifestation. A kinship in the systematic operation of the codes seems an inescapable philosophical conclusion. A new dictionary, it seems to me, will

be well advised to orient its presentation to this concept of structure.

#### IV

Another problem which the lexicographer must face is that of the extent to which his dictionary can go in giving an up-to-date description of the structure of language. Dr. Samuel Johnson devoted about 125 words to five rules of syntax, because he thought that "our language has so little inflection, or variety of terminations, that its construction neither requires nor admits many rules." Still with us is the fallacy of Johnson that inflection is the chief key to language operation. In a context of a denunciation of an English grammar that is based upon Latin, in a chapter on "The Modern View of Grammar and Linguistics" in The English Language Arts (1952), Robert C. Pooley asserted that "To insist that a certain fixed arrangement of shall and will constitute [sic] the future tense in English is to perpetuate an error originally derived from Latin influences." The assumption of Johnson and Pooley was that inflection is a determining factor in tense creation. Tenses in many languages are formed both by inflection and composition. Pooley made the further mistake of asserting that "English expressed the idea of future by the use of the present tense (I go tomorrow), by the present progressive form (am going tomorrow), and by a large number of various phrases, including I shall go, I will go, I hope to go, I plan to go, and so forth." It must be obvious that tomorrow expresses the concept of future in I go tomorrow and I am going tomorrow. Tense in English must always operate in relationship to a non-verb statement of specific time. Tense and specific time are not at all identical ideas in English.

By contrast with Dr. Johnson, Noah Webster inserted into his An American Dictionary (1828) his A Philosophical and Practical Grammar in which position

was given prominence as a structuring essential. In about 10,000 words of explanation he presented forty-five rules of syntax. Webster was on the right track. He gave new names to the parts of speech. He accepted current usage and explained many of the structurewords in a more modern way than most grammars widely used today.

Recent dictionaries have uniformly limited grammatical information to the entries and have not ventured to devote a section to the structure of English or to the grammar of current English. Some of them give grammatical material in a history of English, but in general there has been no adequate presentation of the systematic organization of English. The distribution of words into classes can be accomplished only on the basis of the positions taken by words in sentences. As a consequence the lexicographer must have a firm grasp upon syntax and upon the principles of functionality in language operation.

#### V

I have posed problems in the metaphysics of language as they relate primarily to lexicography. Were I to offer a single solution to all problems and thus to suggest a new metaphysical principle, I would say that the formulation of an answer would come through a comparative study of representative languages in all families. Structural linguistics has provided a sound basis for a philosophy and psychology of language. In this brief paper I have been able to mention only four major generalizations. These are of significance to the grammarian and the formulator of teaching theory and practice, as well as to the lexicographer. Language is a system whose structure is more important than vocabulary, and the etymological and operating analyses, as well as the teaching procedures in language, must move in harmony with these new discoveries. As the handbook to language, a dictionary will show its modernity by adopting these or other scientifically based concepts.

### "... The Way They Say It"

WILLIAM R. BOWDEN

As a spectator sport, the debate between the linguistic grammarians and the traditionalists offers much of the exhilaration—the wit, the suspense, the conflict, the drama—of a political campaign. Although the issues in this campaign are almost purely intellectual ones, with no very significant social or economic implications, the debate is not carried on at a purely intellectual level. Just as in the political arena, eloquent

spokesmen for the opposing parties assail each other's platforms and make glowing promises on behalf of their own. These speakers obviously have no hope of converting each other; instead, their performance is directed toward the great inscrutable electorate, the thousands of men and women who teach English in our schools and colleges, or who will teach it. One of the grammatical parties is new, the other established, so that the burden of persuasion is upon the new party to woo the electors away from the views and attitudes that they have absorbed from childhood. It is conceivable that the proponents of the lin-

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guistic approach might capture the educationist lobby and thus set up a dictatorship through a military coup. It is also conceivable, I suppose, that they might propagate prolifically enough to win an eventual victory at the polls through the strength of their own numbers. But for true peace or anything approaching it in our time, it seems to me that their best hope is to win considerable support from the existing electorate.

I consider myself representative of the electorate, or at least of a fairly large segment of it. My formal grammatical training was completed and my teaching habits were fairly well formed before any real awareness of structural linguistics penetrated into the academic circles in which I moved. But although I was trained in the traditional grammar and find it quite adequate for my personal needs, I am ready to investigate any proffered means of improving the quality of my product in the English 1 classroom; certainly I see room for improvement there. Accordingly, my attitude toward the structuralists is as open-minded as I can make it, Surely many other English teachers must share my position. We are the independent voters, in effect; we are the ones whom the linguistics should woo.

I propose to discuss here not the matter, the platform of the linguists -the validity of their ideas or of the claims they make for those ideas-but their manner, their campaign technique. Now, I am aware that Linguist, is not Linguist, is not Linguist; but it is the public-relations front of the party as a whole that interests me. I suggest, therefore, that we synthesize a composite linguist from the collection of materials brought together by Harold B. Allen in his Readings in Applied English Linguistics (Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1958). Certainly structural linguistics is less than monolithic, and there is not perfect agreement among the authors

represented in this book; but for our present purposes such an anthology is made almost to order. All illustrations and quotations in my text will be from the Allen Readings, unless otherwise specified, and references will be by page number only. Anyone who cares to know what particular author has made a particular statement can easily find out by looking up the page cited, but my concern is with the general impression a non-linguist receives from reading the book.<sup>1</sup>

On the whole, the linguists, as we meet them in the Readings, use what I think of as good grammar. My themereader's eye was busy enough to pick up some twenty-five typographical errors in the book, but in all these pages it caught only one sentence which caused me pain for grammatical reasons. Furthermore, allowing for the straitening effects of the technical nature of the subject matter in many of the selections, I found the writing adequate (and much of it admirable) stylistically. There were occasional exceptions. For example, I was somewhat bemused when I encountered the statement, ". . . without moving from their chairs the young women hear themselves pressed to gird for love and the young men for war" (p. 338). I feel pressure rather than bear it, and I think I should expect a young woman preparing for love to ungird rather than to gird; but perhaps customs are different in Detroit. In general, however, I should not hesitate to commit my students, or even my own children, to the tutelage of the teachers anthologized by Professor Allen.

In brief, I am not ready to accept the bi-polar orientation of John C. Sherwood, who suggests that the difference

<sup>&#</sup>x27;The fairness of my procedure is supported by the fact that my references are pretty well distributed throughout the book with the exception of those parts dealing not with grammar but with linguistic geography and linguistics in the teaching of literature.

between linguist and traditionalist may actually reflect two entirely different ways of life.2 These people care about the same things I care about: they are dedicating themselves to the improvement of the American college student's writing, and, to judge by their practice, their idea of good writing is very like my own. They are seeking the same ends as I am, and if their route to these ends can be demonstrated to be better than mine, I am willing to follow it with them. Still, if I am to join them, I'd like to be made to feel welcome; and this is precisely what they are not doing, even though, as I have suggested, I and my kind represent their best hope of opening a good many classroom doors now closed to them. I should like, therefore, to make the following friendly suggestions concerning the technique by which I am being wooed.8

First of all, we English teachers, whatever our students may think, are human beings. If you prick us, do we not bleed? In their impatience to save the world, the linguists seem too ready to prick us who have not yet embraced them; but prickliness is not a quality conducive to embraces. I tend to throw up a protective shell against the man who calls someone who does not agree with him a "contemporary stump-speaker" (p. 11), who speaks of something he does not believe in as "pipedreams" (p. 342) or as a "smear campaign" (p. 62), who suggests a strong similarity between conventional English teaching and the Inquisition (p. 6). It seems to me to exaggerate both the defects of traditional grammar and the virtues of the structural approach to compare the former to the Ptolemaic system (pp. 8, 41, 61), or to pre-Darwinian biology and four-element chemistry (pp. 50, 61). I admire the work of Professor Fries, but I should like to think about it for another week or so before putting his bust on the shelf with those of Socrates, Galileo, Darwin, and Freud (p. 62).

Sometimes, it seems to me, these paper bullets of the brain ricochet to the peril of the marksman. Thus any distinction in usage or pronunciation which the traditionalist insists upon is likely to be labeled a "shibboleth" (pp. 293, 302), the implication being that the distinction is utterly artificial and therefore utterly trivial. To the humanistically oriented English teacher, however, the important detail may be not the artificiality of the Gileadites' test but the fate of the people who did not pass it. Thus we may be encouraged to go on trying to eradicate "sibboleth" from our students' usage. Even the supposedly damning association of traditional grammar with Ptolemaic astronomy may remind us that in the teaching of navigation and surveying, the two-sphere universe is still used today just because for these purposes it works more efficiently than the Copernican. Thus we may be confirmed in our loyalty to a grammatical system that has always worked fairly well for us despite the trouble it seems to give the linguists. But whether it backfires or not, name-calling remains an emotional device which suits ill with the scientific pretensions of those linguists who resort to it. Moreover, it is bad wooing; my own response to it is not "Yes, you have convinced me," but Maria's to Malvolio: "Go shake your ears!"

We have noted that the English teacher is a human being; it follows that he thinks of himself as having some common sense. The linguist repels the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup>Dr. Kinsey and Professor Fries," College English, XXI (Feb. 1960), 275-280.

<sup>&</sup>quot;It goes without saying that the opponents of structural linguistics commit most of the same sins as the linguists themselves; but being the established party and therefore not faced with the problem of winning a following, they are less in need of advice and (if the political analogy holds true) less likely to listen to it.

<sup>\*</sup>Thomas S. Kuhn, The Copernican Revolution (1959), p. 38.

outsider when he makes blanket charges of a senseless rigidity. I do not consider that it makes a convincing case for structural linguistics for the linguist to belabor me for sins which he chooses to attribute to me because he suffered from those sins in his teacher in the fourth grade in 1921. My examples of this sort of thing, like those indeed of everything I am discussing, are limited by the editorial tact of Professor Allen, who has preferred the temperate to the intemperate; but even within the Readings one finds implications that anyone who teaches traditional grammar spends most of his time insisting on such usages as "It's I" (pp. 206, 235), and the differentiation of shall and will (p. 196). We are accused of concentrating on trivial faults, like the misplaced just in "I just want one" (p. 95), or on errors which our students have never heard of, like "I taken it" (p. 139). We are supposed to shout in horror, "Bad English!" (p. 205) and to preach about the "rules" (p. 209). Now, I simply do not believe that more than a handful of college English teachers do these things today; my colleagues and I don't do them, and so I do not consider that anyone who talks in these terms is talking to me.

Related to such dead-horse beating is the linguists' stress on the problems which they say exist in traditional grammar but would never occur under a structural regime. Many of these "problems" involve definition: the definition of noun and verb (p. 34), of subject (p. 105n), of prepositional phrases (p. 350).<sup>5</sup> It is not hard to create confusion over the part of speech of *blue* in "he wore a blue tie" (p. 66) or of *dog's* in "a dog's life" and "the dog's alive" (p. 54). It is possible to create a problem by professing to show how "correct"

In considering this variation of the straw-man technique we have left behind us those aspects of linguistic dialectic which provoke personal resentment and have come to those which offend in a more general way by violating the principles of logic, fairness, and regard for truth which ought to underlie the teaching of both composition and literature. Dr. Johnson lamented the fact that "The first care of the builder of a new system is to demolish the fabrics which are standing."6 A. M. Tibbetts has castigated one type of demolitionist whom he describes as attempting to toady to the students by appealing to their "natural

grammar would handle a given situation but actually doing nothing of the kind (p. 266). It is possible to shake the layman's faith in the standard desk dictionaries by posing a problem of appropriate usage without reference to context (pp. 246-7). Given enough ingenuity, it is even possible to frighten oneself with the danger that if the dictionary classifies so as a pronoun among its other uses, the reader will assume that it has the inflectional characteristics of they and construct for it "some monstrous paradigm as so "sor \*sors \*som" (p. 382). Now, supposing these to be genuine problems, we might think them capable of being solved without the necessity of replacing our whole system of grammar with a new one. But it is worth repeating that many an English teacher has adjusted his thinking to the traditional grammar so successfully that these matters are not problems to him at all-or, at most, that they are academic curiosa with no direct relevance to his ordinary business of teaching rhetoric and literature. If this particular argument is to make any impression at all on such teachers, it will have to be based on grounds more relative than the threat that some fool may say "The book is sors."

<sup>\*</sup>This difficulty the linguists sometimes avoid by doing without definitions altogether, a stratagem remarkably frustrating to traditionalists whose definitions have been disparaged, in that it inhibits retaliation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., ed., Samuel Johnson on Shakespeare (1960), p. 57.

adolescent dislike of authority" with statements to the effect that English grammar "smells" and "can only be described as a mess." Such appeals are noteworthy mainly for lack of taste, but very occasionally we encounter charges against traditional grammar so fantastic that it is impossible to take them seriously. Thus we read, of our own times, "Literature and drama languish; we have fewer readers of books, fewer bookstores, fewer libraries in proportion to our numbers than any [sic] western nation" (p. 336), and we are encouraged to think that this unhappy situation all arises out of our failure to have accepted structural linguistics. This charge is matched by one of which Professor Sherwood reminds us, Albert H. Marckwardt's idea that many of the neuroses plaguing modern Americans stem from our eternal fear of making a grammatical error and being corrected for it.8

A device perhaps even more distressing because it is employed so widely and accepted so calmly is the use of a striking half-truth to impress the lay reader who is not in a position to see what qualifications would be necessary to turn the half-truth into a whole truth. The stress on idiolects is such a halftruth (p. 11). It is both true and startling that we do indeed all speak idiolects; but the negligible significance of the fact does not become apparent until we reflect that to the degree that we use idiolects, to just that degree generalization about language becomes impossible and the study of language becomes meaningless. A very similar example is the inevitable over-emphasis on the fact that language changes (pp. 303, 310). Of course, language does and must change; but the change is normally very slow, and the fact of change is hardly an unalloyed blessing, since it impairs our communications with generations past and future. Certainly none of Professor Allen's linguists would use the device we occasionally see of a passage of Anglo-Saxon juxtaposed with its modern equivalent to "demonstrate the everchanging character of our language,"9 but neither do they suggest the stability of the language in the absence of extraordinary conditions. A fair illustration of this stability might be found in the fact in a recent examination the members of my undergraduate language class almost unanimously identified a passage from Dr. Johnson in modern spelling as contemporary twentieth-century prose. It seems to me that if science is man's attempt to detect the principles underlying apparently discrete phenomena, this emphasis on dissimilarities is retrogressive and destructive. From a moral point of view, the willingness to permit a striking but distorted concept to supplant the less interesting truth seems deplorable, to say the least.

Return, Alpheus! the dread voice is past; return and consider the occasional failure of the linguistic pastor to practice what he preaches. He chides us, for example, for saying, or being tempted to say, that the use of disinterested in the sense of bored is "wrong" (pp. 212-3, 293-4), because "it can safely be stated that a word means what a speaker intends it to mean and what a hearer interprets it to mean" (p. 291). Now, a couple of months ago a speaker assured the Parent-Teacher Association to which I belong that if we voted to combine our school district with others into a union district, we would eliminate duplicity in the administration. Since mine was the only audible snort from the audience, I suppose I must allow that duplicity can mean duplication. But in the Readings I find a linguist complain-

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Finally, there are a few specific details which a linguist intent on converting an uncommitted English teacher ought to remember about the nature of the English teacher's job. For instance, we face in our students what we might refer to colloquially-or locally-as a hard-nosed public. Frankly, I would not dare to announce solemnly to a class that the way to determine whether the word score means two points or six is to look in its vicinity for the presence of such lexical clusters as goal line, touchdown, tackle, or court, basket, rebound (pp. 128-33). This is a semantic ambiguity to begin with, and my students would resolve it semantically but efficiently by asking whether we were talking about football or basketball; I'm afraid they would find little of practical value in theories of lexical distribution. And so I would suggest that unless we really don't know what the score is, we refrain from obfuscating the obvious.

The ordinary English teacher-the teacher of rhetoric and literature-is also committed to an opposition to jargon and cant. One of his fundamental beliefs is that the good writer should be able to make almost anything clear to the intelligent nonspecialist without recourse to a strange or abstruse terminology. Although he recognizes fully that new concepts require new names, he has had enough painful experience with the jargon of his colleagues in sociology (and, indeed, of some of his own brethren among the new critics) to react with suspicion to an insistence upon the need for a whole new terminology to discuss material which has been within the educated man's purview for centuries. But he reacts with warmth and friendliness to the linguist who says, and acts on the belief, ". . . there is no reason for changing terms just to be different, and wherever one can adequately describe a syntactic unit in terms of the standard conventional terminology this should be done." 10

Moreover, the typical English teacher, as a result of his extensive training in literature, takes the long view. He has seen a great many movements begin and end through the centuries, a great many enthusiasms come and go. Thus he has become something of a skeptic. He does not feel that the world has to be saved today; it still will be here and still will be imperfect tomorrow. Meanwhile, traditional grammar is not doing it any serious damage; so he can take his time about appraising and accepting structural linguistics. The linguist might well keep this attitude in mind and look with sorrow, not with anger, on those who hesitate to lay the old aside,

Perhaps most important of all, the linguist might reconsider his own position in relation to the teaching of English. The linguist sees himself as a scientist. He is like the botanist, who identifies, classifies, analyzes, and observes (pp. 53, 304, 307), or like the weather man, who records temperatures and barometric pressures but cannot really do anything about them (p. 330). "Good" and "bad" are not meaningful terms in his vocabulary; he deals in what is. The ordinary English teacher, on the other hand, is a humanist by inclination and training. This does not mean that his attitude is anti-scientific, but it is antibehaviorist. He is committed to a faith in man's moral, political, and intellectual autonomy; and his subject matter includes not only what is but

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what he thinks ought to be. To change this quality in him would literally uncreate him; and that would be a pity, because his influence is beneficial, by

and large.

But the linguist himself abandons his scientific objectivity in some areas-certainly in his role as crusader for his system, and I think also in his capacity as teacher of composition and literature. No one would be an English teacher without some desire to change what is to what ought to be. Of course, I may be wrong about him. In Allen's Readings I find the statement, "Formal English is not a segment of the language, but the self-conscious expression of persons who are ill-at-ease and a means also of keeping people at a distance while we do our business with them" (p. 331). If my composite linguist subscribes to this statement, then I am mistaken in

the impression of him which I have formed from Allen's book, and I shall have to agree with Sherwood that he is a goat who cannot herd with sheep like us. But if I am right in believing that he and I ultimately seek the same goals, then all I need fear is that after reading my prescription of how I would be wooed, he may decide that my vote is not worth the effort necessary to win it. In that case, I need only point out that to strive for complete fairness and candor would seem to be its own reward, my vote being merely a bonus. If, on the other hand, the linguist rejects my values with regard to the teaching of English, he still may profit from pondering what I have said here; for a sincere seeker of truth will want to see his discoveries accepted on their own merits, not to foist them off by techniques which he would condemn in a seller of soap or cigarettes.

# Traditional Grammar or Structural Linguistics: A Buyer's Point of View

ALAIN RENOIR

The necessity to make a considered choice between traditional grammar and structural linguistics is one which teachers of freshman English composition can no longer avoid. The choice, however, is difficult, because most of us are primarily students of literature who know little about traditional grammar and less about structural linguistics. Like instructors in many other fields, we do not man-

ufacture our own tools, and the most effective teacher of composition might prove just as puzzled at the thought of taking apart an adverbial genitive as the best flight instructor might be at the thought of taking apart a fuel injector. Both use tools which have been designed for them by specialists: directly or indirectly, the flight instructor buys the airplane designed to suit his needs by the aircraft engineer; the teacher of composition buys the handbook of English designed to suit his needs by the specialist of the English language. When we teach composition, we select a handbook, we assign it to our students, and

An assistant professor of English at the University of California, Dr. Renoir is a specialist in Middle English and counts among his several publications "Descriptive Technique in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" (Orbis Litterarum, 1959).

we either teach from it or refer to it, as the case may be. We presumably select the handbook which proves most adaptable to our aims and methods of teach-

ing.

Before World War II, the selection was relatively simple and of no great consequence. Whatever formal training we had received in grammar was traditional, and all the commonly available handbooks were of the same persuasion. Accordingly, our decision to buy this or that text rested largely on our opinion of the presentation and on details of interpretation. In recent years, however, the problem has been complicated by the appearance on the market of structural-linguistics handbooks, which subscribe to a new and radically different view of the language.

These texts call for our careful consideration on at least three counts. First, structural linguistics has amply demonstrated its practicality in fields where, unlike composition, the results may be measured scientifically (see Eva Silver-"An Experiment in Applied Linguistics," Moderna Sprak, LIV, 1 ff.). Second, the fact that publishers, who probably first issued these texts as a commercial experiment, continue to print them makes it obvious that at least some teachers are assigning them to their students. This observation in turn suggests that even the most ardent traditionalist will soon have to take a good look at structural-linguistics handbooks if he wishes to keep abreast of his colleagues and students, Third, the authors of these texts-scholars like Harry R. Warfel, Paul Roberts, James Sledd-are among the very most distinguished students of the English language today. It is significant that all of them have been thoroughly trained in traditional grammar and have subsequently turned away from it in favor of what they consider a superior approach to the study of language. Their opinions cannot be dismissed lightly.

Like traditional grammarians, structural linguists disagree on many things; but on one point they seem almost unanimous: structural linguistics, they say, can describe language more accurately than any previously devised system. Some of them even go so far as arguing that only structural linguistics provides us with the tools we need for the practice of our profession (see Harry R. Warfel, CEA Critic, XXII, no. 2, p. 12). If we accept the structural linguists' word, our decision to switch or not to switch from traditional grammar must rest primarily on two considerations: (1) how necessary is accurate linguistic description to the teaching of composition, and (2) what will be the cost of this accuracy?

This writer's opinion is that extreme accuracy in linguistic description is certainly desirable but by no means necessary to the teaching of composition. The main job of the teacher of composition is not to describe language, but rather to teach his students how to compose. Composition, as Professor Bertrand Evans has recently pointed out (English Journal, 1959, pp. 12-20), is primarily a matter of developing an idea as clearly and powerfully as possible. The means of accomplishing this end belong to the province of rhetoric rather than to that of grammar, be it structural or traditional: they are principally logic, organization, selection of words, and ad-

equate use of images.

Of course, no one will deny that a minimal knowledge of grammar is essential to the study of rhetoric. In particular, the student should acquire a basic terminology and as great a familiarity as possible with current linguistic forms and rhetorical conventions. But even here, much of what we call English grammar is simply an exhortation to practice common sense in one's utterances. This statement does not imply the writer's belief that there is any intrinsic common sense in language, but

it asserts his conviction that there is much common sense in the civilized use of Modern English. For instance, no common sense will explain why Latin almost never uses the subject pronoun and Anglo-Saxon readily dispenses with it, while Modern English uses it consistently. On the other hand, within the frame of Modern English, common sense will tell a native speaker that a feminine singular pronoun is likely to refer to a feminine singular noun. When some years ago this writer taught a course in remedial English, he adopted a threepage outline of current English practices and supplemented it exclusively with exercises requiring the application of common sense to grammatical problems. By the end of the semester, the students were writing substantially better than preceding groups who had worked their ways through very detailed handbooks.

In brief, the argument presented here is that, however valuable it may be intrinsically, the progress represented by structural linguistics is not of a kind that makes it indispensable to the teaching of composition. Inadequate as traditional grammar may be for the purpose of accurate linguistic description, the tools it gives us are quite adequate for the teaching of composition.

Even if we agree with the foregoing argument that we do not need the extreme accuracy with which the authors of structural-linguistics handbooks claim to provide us, we must agree that it is at least a desirable feature. We must therefore inquire what is the cost of this desirable feature. This writer's opinion is that the cost is too high.

Comparison of two definitions of the word "noun" will illustrate the point. The first is taken from a handbook of traditional grammar: "Nouns name persons, places, or things (The man was there. John was here.)" (N. A. Ford and W. E. Turpin, Basic Skills for Better Writing, New York, 1959, p. 26.). It leaves something to be desired in

scientific accuracy, for, as a structural linguist has aptly pointed out, it might be understood to include nominal phrases as well as single nouns (James Sledd, A Short Introduction to English Grammar, Chicago, 1959, p. 231). The second is from what may perhaps be considered the most impressive structural-linguistics handbook: "A noun is any word belonging to an inflectional series which is built, like man, man's, men, men's or boy, boy's, boys, boys', on either or both of the contrasts between singular and plural numbers and between common and possessive or genitive cases, and on no other contrasts" (James Sledd, ibid.). Unlike the traditional definition quoted above, this is scientifically accurate.

But there are further differences between the two definitions. For instance, the definition from the structural-linguistics handbook is (1) much lengthier and (2) much more complicated than the other. The foregoing observations hold true of structural-linguistics handbooks in general: they are likely to prove scientifically accurate but extremely lengthy and complicated. For example, Donald J. Lloyd and Harry R. Warfel's American English in Its Cultural Setting (New York, 1956) has 533 pages, and Paul Roberts' Understanding English has 499. The former would have the student learn "the main channels of migration" in the United States (p. 14); the latter would have him learn the history of "the invention of writing" (p. 49); both would have him learn the anatomy of the speech-producing mechanism (p. 287 ff; p. 84 ff.) as a necessary step in the process of understanding English gram-

As a result of the features outlined above, the teacher who uses a structural-linguistics handbook is likely to find difficulties in teaching his students the essentials of English grammar which are both necessary and sufficient to teach composition. He will run the risk of either teaching nothing or devoting an

unconscionable amount of time to linguistic matters not immediately relevant to composition. If he attempts to bypass the mass of momentarily irrelevant material in the book, his students will prove unable to understand relevant grammatical explanations that depend on it; if he attempts to cover everything in the book, he will spend so much time teaching language that he will have little left to teach composition.

The expression "momentarily irrelevant material" has been used advisedly, for materials that are immediately irrelevant to the teaching of English composition often have an unquestionable value of their own and are quite relevant to certain fields of study. The study of language as a phenomenon of its own has long been one of the recognized functions of universities; and the study of structural-linguistics is immediately relevant to the study of language as such.

We must not, however, equate the teaching of linguistics with the teaching of composition. We may decide that all college students should have a course in linguistics, and we may even decide that the course in linguistics ought to be substituted for the usual course in composition. We may not, however, offer instruction principally in linguistics and pretend that we are teaching composition. The overwhelming success of William Strunk and E. B. White's The Elements of Style (New York, 1959) suggests that a majority of teachers of composition-the buyers of the tools designed by the specialist-wants to teach composition rather than linguistics: the book has only seventy-one pages; somewhat less than one-fifth of it is devoted to what we call grammar, and the remainder consists of concise rules of style and organization; every element is immediately relevant to the teaching of composition.

Thus far, the argument against the structural-linguistics handbooks has been

that they put the emphasis on the wrong thing. Two less obvious, though equally important, arguments against them may likewise be mentioned here. Both are concerned with the side-effects of specialization.

In order to gain accuracy, structural linguists have specialized to the point where their methods of description are no longer readily interchangeable from one language to another. For instance, the concepts which apply to English cannot very well be used with Latin. Indeed, one of the very most distinguished exponents of the structural approach, Professor W. Nelson Francis, prefaces his impressive study, The Structure of American English (New York, 1958), with the statements that his book makes only two assumptions about the reader, and that the first is "that he is what linguists call a native speaker of English, preferably American Englishthat is, one who learned it in infancy as his first language" (p. iii). The limitation of the audience is quite legitimate, since Professor Francis addresses his book to prospective specialists of the American language, and specialists in any field must perforce be selected according to their fitness for the task. Nevertheless, some of its implications -that phonetics are essential to the study of grammar and that there is nothing approaching a universal grammar-may have rather disturbing consequences when adopted non-specialist for the instruction of the general student. Inaccurate as traditional grammar may be, it is a kind of universal grammar: indeed the principal cause of its inaccuracy is its attempt at being universal. The result is that the native American who has been exposed to traditional grammar may turn to the study of the common Indo-European languages without having to assimilate a series of entirely new concepts about the nature of language. Though we may either find means of circumventing

the problem or simply decide that we no longer need the escape from cultural isolation which the common language of traditional grammar once gave us, we had better consider the results very seriously before turning entirely to structural grammar for instruction at all

levels.

Again in its search for accuracy, structural linguistics estranges us from the grammatical language of our forefathers perhaps even more radically than it does from that of foreigners. The difference between the two has been illustrated earlier with the definitions of the term "noun." The nature of this difference has been explained recently by Professor Warfel: "Traditional grammar emphasizes meaning. . . . Structural grammar finds the mathematical theory of functionality in natural language and thus discovers the logic of the system" (CEA Critic, XXII, no. 2, p. 9). Obviously, the student whose only acquaintance with grammar is of the structural kind will find a severe curtailment in his means of communication with earlier grammarians -say with the humanists of the early sixteenth century. Here again, the problem may be circumvented; or we may decide that modern Americans no longer need contact with the past. In this respect, it may be considered indicative that many of the American universities which have accepted the study of structural linguistics as an intrinsic part of graduate programs in English have at the same time eliminated the requirement in early English language and literature.

In conclusion, this writer's opinion is

that the most ardent advocates of the structural approach to English composition have somewhat substituted the means for the end. Like certain professors of Education whose enthusiasm for method has led to the near-extinction of subject matter withih their programs, structural linguists would have us devote so much time to the study of the tools of composition that we would have no time left for composition itself. Because of his avowed ignorance of the subject, this writer is willing to accept Professor Sledd's assertion that structural linguists have "done great things for the study of our language; . . . [they] have given us fresh insight into the nature of language and of languages as systems of arbitrary vocal symbols, each of which must be formally described in its own terms; they have invented better techniques of description, based on the recognition that grammatical categories cannot be defined semantically; they have provided the best available description . . . of English phonology; and they have taken at least some notable steps toward a better morphology and syntax" ([Harvard] Comparative Literature Newsletter, VIII, 2-3). These achievements, however, belong in large part to the province of the behavioral sciences, and the price the humanist must pay for their benefits at the present time-the diminution of the time given to composition and the relinquishing of traditional means of cultural and historical relationshipseems much too high for the considerate buyer.

#### RESOLUTIONS

The 1961 Committee on Resolutions of the National Council of Teachers of English includes Professor Richard Meade, Chairman, University of Virginia; John Ragle, Springfield High School, Vermont; and Professor L. M. Myers, Arizona State University, Tempe. Resolutions to be considered by the committee must be submitted to one of these members no later than November 15, 1961.

### Two Cheers for Linguistics

HANS P. GUTH

As the teacher of English sees one familiar certainty after another being swept away by the rising tide of linguistic scholarship, at least one new certainty is already taking shape: In dealing with grammar, with language as a system of structural and formal relationships, the average classroom teacher is essentially an amateur. Stung into rebuttal by the linguist's questioning of some familiar definition or precept, he will usually find that his grasp of relevant facts is incomplete, that his strategy of defense is improvised, that his intuitions about language are hard to translate into rigorously specific and verifiable statements. In vain does he turn to familiar authorities for a reasoned statement of basic premises and procedures, and he cannot very well formulate these premises for himself without becoming a fulltime grammarian. Why there are eight parts of speech and by what methods of analysis they have been arrived at, by what process of elimination and qualification the major generalizations have been developed: on these points the conventional grammar is reticent or mute. Meanwhile the linguist, articulate if not voluble in matters of methodology, armed with a crushing array of unsuspected instances, stands ready to demolish whatever feeble arguments the classroom teacher is shoring up against his ruins. In the very process of defending his own methods and assumptions, the teacher is likely to realize that the linguist-whatever the limitations of his premises or the shortcomings in his manners-is indeed dealing with the phonological and morphological and syntactical "stuff" of language, and doing so in a rigorous, systematic, and instructive manner. The more seriously the teacher takes the task of studying, in order to refute, the various recent applications of linguistic method to English grammar, the more will he find himself changing from an antagonist into—a student.

Except for those temperamentally inclined to the joys of conversion and discipleship, this change is bound to be slow. painful, and humiliating. Grammar is a subject on which most English teachers consider themselves-and are expected to be by the public-unquestioned authorities. If a teacher has taught a version of the traditional grammar for many years, the words he has to eat form a mountain comparable to the riceberg barring the traveler's way into the land of Cockaigne. The ridicule and superciliousness with which the charges against the traditional grammar are often presented make it difficult for the teacher with any sort of self-respect to plead guilty to the indictment.

Once these psychological difficulties are overcome, however, the relief is likely to be enormous and the intellectual profit considerable. As an interested outsider, the teacher of literature or of rhetoric can follow developments in grammar with the same care and attention as developments in other disciplines intimately related to his own. The immediate benefits he will derive are partly a matter of perspective, partly a matter of solid information not available elsewhere. Emphasis upon structure leads to a "horizontal" rather than a "vertical" analysis; the student is closer to the actual "feel" of language when he approaches it through the study of structural pattern rather than through the study of individual parts of speech, of declensions and

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conjugations. In the new grammars, the sections dealing with sentence patterns have the virtue of displaying rather than cataloguing typical relationships, of reenforcing the intuitive sense of "what goes with what" that is basic to language learning. In those of the new books that are aimed at undergraduates, discussion of grammatical matters, if not less technical or more "simple," is often fresh and resourceful. Terminology is often more native, unpretentious, and immediately intelligible than that of traditional grammar. "Cluster," "pattern," "headword," and "noun marker" seem pedagogically preferable to the lumpy Latinisms that used to make instruction in grammar a never-ending "review" of key terms.

In some areas, linguistics can deliver concrete information where all used to be unsystematized intuition. A detailed and rigorously verified system of intonation, for instance, if not central to the teaching of writing, promises to clear up many moot points in metrics and related

fields.

Finally, even though linguists are just as prone as traditional grammarians to make "grammar" synonymous with "language," the new grammars should ultimately promote a clearer awareness of different facets of language. The linguist's emphasis, as a matter of procedure, on tangible signals sets apart such areas as the logic and the psychology of language, and at the same time reveals our ignorance concerning them. The notional definitions of the old grammar obviously were an expression of the intuitive feeling that ultimately the structure of language in some way or other reflects the way we intellectually "slice" our experience. Psychologically, "nounness" has something to do with "thingness"-with objects of thought considered, literally or figuratively, under the aspect of threedimensional existence. "Verbness" has something to do with action or duration-with objects of thought considered under the aspect of a fourth dimension,

that of time. The ambiguity of the conventional definitions of noun and verb results from their merely groping for relationships that are exceedingly complex. Similarly, a system of personal pronouns obviously reflects concepts of identity and of identification, of "I"-ness and "you"-ness and "togetherness." What the linguists have demonstrated is simply that, interesting and legitimate as such inquiries are, it is feasible to analyze the signals of language without overt reference to notional or semantic criteria. If the resulting grammar is rigorously restricted to the study of the tangible mechanisms of language, its claim to "scientific" standing loses much of the polemical and controversial character that similar claims have when extended into less tangible areas.

In his capacity as a student of language, the teacher persuaded by this kind of reasoning would presumably bury the hatchet (the one firmly embedded in his skull by his linguistic colleagues) and restrict his activities in the main to attentive perusal of the grammars sent to him by thoughtful publishers' representatives. He would enjoy some of the pleasures of the spectator, only occasionally cheering on an especially vigorous or agile gladiator in the grammatical arena. In his capacity as a teacher of language and literature, of course, he will find such disengagement impossible. Insofar as his students need an understanding of grammatical relationships and grammatical terms, he will have to make a number of difficult decisions. At the present stage, at least, he will have to adjust in some sort of temporary compromise differences in emphasis or in analysis due to differences in the way different grammarians adjust the rival claims of such intangible criteria as clarity, consistency, efficiency, or intuitive plausibility. While the specialist derives from such problems the intellectual excitement of a vigorous and rapidly developing discipline, the classroom teacher will often have to

make choices that are little more than improvisation. In addition, he has to face questions that the specialist can rightly disregard in analysis. Should we salvage whatever is usable in traditional grammar and work toward a gradual transition? Should we work toward relative uniformity in terminology and analysis to ensure reasonable continuity in the student's courses in language? The appearance of such texts as Sledd's Short Introduction to English Grammar and Brown, Brown and Bailey's Form in Modern English is encouraging evidence that various kinds and degrees of correlation between traditional and linguistic grammar are possible, and that the profession will be able to move in the direction of the latter without undergoing the Baphometic fire-baptism that earlier converts experienced. The skill with which such transition and such correlation are made possible will determine whether, as in the earlier battle over usage, large sections of the profession (not to mention the general public) will simply relapse into a resentful stand-pat-ism, largely impervious to future efforts at enlightenment.

Reference to usage reminds us of a second set of problems for the classroom teacher trying to come to terms with linguistic science. The methods of linguistics, designed to cope with the concrete facts of structure, are not easily applicable to the social consequences of usage and the psychological effects of style. In discussing usage, the linguist is characteristically most at ease and in his element when investigating matters like dialectal variants, where social and psychological variables are secondary, and where well-organized fieldwork can yield solid results in the best tradition of positivistic philology. By his very reluctance to make specific statements in less solid, less objective areas, the linguist is exercising an important indirect influence. In many minds, grammar and usage are still not two separate concepts; and if authorities on the one hesitate to make detailed statements on the other, the implication may be that no such statements can authoritatively be made and that such as are made by nonlinguists are suspect. This influence is likely to be beneficial insofar as it helps to combat that obsessive overemphasis on correctness that has always kept many English teachers from teaching other things of equal or greater importance. It will help to decrease the number of students who write a tortured no-man'slanguage in a desperate attempt to escape from the too often criticized patterns of their natural speech. On the less beneficial side, however, this influence may initiate in the field of English that same retreat to the tangible and measurable that has given some of our humanistic sister-disciplines quasi-scientific status at the expense of humane significance. Language etiquette, language use and abuse, verbal manipulation and incantation, the structure and conditions of rational discourse, responsible self-expression and effective communication-these areas are not readily measurable or testable, but to the failure of education in these areas many of the political and cultural disasters of Western civilization can be directly traced. Certainly many of the more concrete subjects promote standards of intellectual integrity and responsibility in those dedicated to their pursuit. But the transference of such values to other areas has never been conspicuous, and by and large the world's specialists have studied phonemes and literary history while Rome burned.

For teachers of freshman composition, these vast and apocalyptic generalizations have a very immediate practical bearing. As linguistics becomes more formidable and more and more academically respectable, there will be increasing pressure on the composition teacher to abandon or curtail instruction in such areas as rhetoric, logic, and semantics and to turn his course into an introduction to linguistic

structure. Where he used to explore the pitfalls in defining courage and democracy, he will explore the pitfalls in defining nouns and verbs. Where he used to discuss the "Modest Proposal" to make students ponder the role of satire in moral suasion, he will statistically examine the occurrence of characteristic patterns in Swift's prose. Where he used to goad students into critical reading of the Reader's Digest or Time Magazine, he will conduct a phonemic analysis of English spelling. Where he used to preach that unexamined prose is not worth reading, he will propound that generalizations about language that are not verifiable are not worth making.

The psychological and pedagogical appeal of such a change should not be underestimated. As linguists rightly observe, "critical thinking," "interest in ideas," "sensitivity," etc. are vague and elusive goals. Their pursuit is attended by inevitable moments of disappointment and self-doubt. Adrift on a sea of abstractions, many a teacher of composition has echoed Thomas Gradgrind's plea for facts and "nothing but facts," has longed for a subject-matter where "two and two are four, and nothing over." The adoption of a concrete and systematically organized subject-matter would give the freshman course predictability and the instructor peace of mind. It would, however, deprive the student of a chance to study, through observation and practice under expert guidance, the resources of disciplined expression, It would deprive him of a chance to think through some of his purposes and standards, insofar as they are formulated and revealed through language. It would deprive him of a chance to become less unaware and uncritical in the constant linguistic interchanges of his personal, social, political, and professional life. All of these objectives easily become pious platitudes. But without an earnest effort to give them substance liberal education is doomed to remain a smattering of disconnected specialties. The humane use of language is the most necessarily general of academic subjects, and the course devoted to it is potentially—and often in fact—one of the few genuinely liberalizing courses the average student takes.

Linguists rightly insist that language is the most essentially and centrally human of our activities. But this statement is mere equivocation unless it implies the recognition that the structure of argument and the emotional dynamics of persuasion are as worthy of study as the system of grammatical signals, that overtones are as important as intonation, intention as important as word order, responsibility as important as fluency. The student is not really served if between the study of language structure and the study of imaginative literature he is never made to come to grips with the potentialities and dangers of language as the powerful medium in which most of the concerns of his private, practical, and political life find their expression or reflection. Certainly at least part of the defense of society against the portentous crudities of a McCarthy, the slick indirections of Time, or the boisterous peasant-ries of a Khrushchev must lie in verbal sophistication. The more "concrete" and "tangible" our subject-matter becomes, the less likely it is to rouse the digest reader from his linguistic innocence-"linguistic" here referring to the complete flesh-and-blood reality. Such verbal sophistication and linguistic awareness cannot be easily subdivided into thirty lessons and arranged in a syllabus; courses devoted to it are the despair of administrators, testers, statisticians, and other votaries of the measurable; but while an occasional superior student can be trusted to develop it in his own haphazard way, many others will profit from the guidance of a teacher devoted to the struggle against the trite, the pompous, the invidious, and the inane and to the cultivation of habits that



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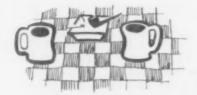
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make for sturdy, intelligible, and respon-

sible expository prose.

Just as in the use of language there is no substitute for intelligence and sensitivity, there is no substitute in the composition program for the intelligent and sensitive teacher. His presence makes possible the combination of substantial reading, detailed and fruitful discussion, and cautiously articulate student writing that distinguishes composition courses at their best. His presence makes possible that dialogue between the student writer and a perceptive, skillful critic which meets some of the most basic requirements implied in that much abused term, "education." In his absence, there can be no objection to the substitution for composition of a subject-matter that can be systematically taught, memorized, tested, and forgotten.

Again, however, there is some encour-

aging evidence that the coexistence of rhetoric and grammar is possible, and that a decent respect for each other's claims and commitments can lead to the preparation of programs and materials in which the two disciplines complement one another. There is something unfortunate about the isolation in which at some conferences (and in some English departments) the representatives of different emphases meet only with their own kind. Historian, critic, and linguist are each likely to suffer from specialist's myopia to the extent that they ignore each other's existence. If we can resist the temptation to educate our colleagues rather than our students, if we can refrain from imposing our own enthusiasms and commitments on unwilling fellowteachers, the wrangling now sometimes observed may give way to fruitful interchange and mutual enlightenment.

## Gerard Manley Hopkins and Textural Intensity:

### A Linguistic Analysis\*

JOHN NIST

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) was an English convert to Catholicism; he subsequently became a Jesuit priest. But this retiring, scholarly introvert, whose private letters contain some of the most penetrating literary criticism of the nineteenth century, was a born poet. Gifted with a perfect ear and an almost unmatchable sense of rhythm, Father

Hopkins nevertheless destroyed the entire body of his early poems upon receiving ordination, published only a few lines during his lifetime, and left no more than ninety pieces, admittedly uneven in value, to posterity via the edition published some thirty years after his death by Robert Bridges, personal friend of the priest and then reigning Poet Laureate of England. And yet this slender output of Hopkins has, in its finest moments, such passion and power, such sound-pattern vitality and cadential excitement, such capacity for mental agony and spiritual ecstasy as to demand for it the honor of being called major meditative lyricism. The poet-priest who wrestled with God in the Gethsemane of his own soul and was pinned

<sup>\*</sup>Adapted from a lecture delivered to the Associação de Cultura Brasil-Estados Unidos in Ribeirão Preto on March 9, 1959.

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down by the Almighty in order that he might die chanting through his tears, "I'm so happy! I'm so happy! I'm so happy!" was in matters of compaction (what young John Keats called "loading every rift with ore" for the benefit of an extremely diffuse Shelley) an artist superior to his more famous contemporaries Tennyson and Browning.

If the poems of Hopkins prove anything, they prove this: Value in literature, as in life, does not depend upon mere size; intensity of expression, as in experience, is of more importance than quantity. Both English and American literature are overburdened with lifeless lumps of mediocrity produced by great poets who, alas, were great only upon occasion. If one were to boil down, for example, the total work of Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron, Tennyson, Browning, Whitman, or Dickinson to the essential achievement of each, he would be amazed at the enormity of the reduction. Yet such boiling down is necessary lest developmental or historical or biographical or ideological relevance (all good in themselves, but somewhat dangerously extra-aesthetic) supplant poetic achievement and, therefore, absolute worth. Needless to say, reduction to such a degree with Shakespeare or Dante or Homer is impossible. So it is with Hopkins, and this impossibility is one mark of his artistic greatness.

One need not lament the fact that Hopkins wrote so few poems; the continual tension between the human desire in him for communication and recognition and the priestly negation in him of what Milton called "that last infirmity of noble mind"—thirst for fame—informed his intention, when he did write, with that terrible and hard brilliance which became immortal diamond. Struggling with God for the mastery of himself, struggling in complete darkness and utter silence, wounded by his Adversary with a pain almost unbearable, Hopkins could not help but cry out at

times; each cry was a poem written with his heart's blood. A poem which, for all he knew or cared, only the eyes of a few uncomprehending friends (and, of course, the all-comprehending Enemy Who loved him into submission) would ever see. Thus the poetry of Hopkins took on all the intimacy of a confessional, all the universal drama of crucifixion. In sheer textural intensity, it is unsurpassed by anything written in the English language.

By textural intensity I mean that constant artistic control of every language moment that is potential to the actualized eternal of the total poem. To illustrate: Lady Macbeth tells her husband to appear the harmless flower to King Duncan but to really be the serpent hiding under that flower. A soliloguy by Macbeth shortly thereafter begins thus: "If the assassination/Could trammel up the consequence, and catch/With his surcease success . . ." The distinctive feature of these lines is obviously the stridency of the phonome s: the hissing of the serpent has already begun, and the intelligent auditor knows that no matter what arguments Macbeth gives himself for not committing murder, he will nevertheless redden his hands with the blood of Duncan. Shakespeare, as he is in so many other things, is a master of textural intensity.

And so is Gerard Manley Hopkins. Like Shakespeare, he bends English syntax to his will, turns nouns into verbs and verbs into nouns, loads his lines with alliteration, assonance, consonance, dramatic repetitions, jammed stresses, breathless junctures, extra-linguistic pitches, and perfect rhythmical correlatives to states of emotion. And like Shakespeare, Hopkins achieves at times metaphysical equations between distinctive-feature manipulations and moral significance. Shakespeare had a habit of wringing a word dry of meanings so that anyone after him should be hard put to stamp that word as his own. Take, for example, his use of incarnadine in Macbeth. No other poet can now call that word his; it is Shakespeare's. Now Gerard Manley Hopkins had something of that habit of wringing a word (or a phrase) dry; no other poet dare appropriate carrion comfort for his own; the phrase belongs completely to Hopkins.

Like Robert Bridges before them, many professors of literature are baffled by Hopkins' textural intensity-especially by that of his sprung rhythm. Accustomed to a proper dilution and distribution of stress in lines of low-pressure poetry, they fail to respond to concentration and saturation of stress in lines of high-pressure poetry. The fault is, of course, theirs-not Hopkins'. But sprung rhythm is not the object of this essay. True, it is a crowning seal upon Hopkins' textural intensity, but I wish to study this feature of his poetry when developed in a more subdued and quiet mood. Textural intensity, when least expected, will flame out in Hopkins' lines like his own "shining from shook foil."

The poem which I wish to consider is the subdued meditative lyric entitled "Spring and Fall: To a Young Child." The mood is autumnally quiet, the message sadly gray, but the tone—due to the electric quality of the texture—is dull-bright with the colors of falling leaves. Here then is the poem:

Margaret, are you grieving
Over Goldengrove unleaving?
Leaves, like the things of man, you
With your fresh thoughts care for, can
you?
Ah! as the heart grows older
It will come to such sights colder
By and by, nor spare a sigh
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;
And yet you will weep and know why.
Now no matter, child, the name:
Sorrow's springs are the same.
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed
What heart heard of, ghost guessed:
It is the blight man was born for,
It is Margaret you mourn for.

The very title of the poem is a forecast of the subtle tensions to be developed in it. Spring is a season of the year, symbol of the child's youth; it is also source of water, symbol of the tears which are the baptism of man's universal grief. Fall is also a season of the year, symbol of the leaves dying and falling from the tree; it is also source of all death, subject for grief, introduced into the world by the Fall of Adam and Eve as theologically understood by the priest. Thus textural intensity, a habit of creative mind with Hopkins, has begun before the first line of the poem appears.

A careful analysis of the first two lines of this poem reveals that there is only one voiceless phoneme in them: the tense-stop t at the end of the child's name. This t fuses with the obligatory juncture following a nominative of address and produces a marvelous piece of texture. The very name of the child-"Margaret"-is superb in itself; no other name will do. The mournful quality of the assonance on tense o ("Over Goldengrove") is a forecast of the more intense sorrow to come, but the stroke of genius is in "unleaving." Here Hopkins takes a noun, turns it into a verbal (participle) and adds a Latin prefix (a favorite habit of Shakespeare too) to achieve something original, spare, and strange for the inscape of his poem. He could have said "unleafing," but the voiceless f would destroy the hypnotic quality of the resonant hum he has established with voiced phonemes. Thus the t in "Margaret" is more of a deliberate success than had first appeared.

The next two lines are an artistic departure from the normal order of English syntax for the sake of dramatic power. The priest is awe-struck by the capacity for sorrow in one so young; he conveys his religious wonder by the insistence of repeated rhythmical equivalents: "care for, can you?" Alliteration, assonance, and consonance have been obvious in the preceding lines; now Hopkins introduces in a very muted way two elements of distinctive-feature manipulation which are to take on, a little later, acute moral significance: stridency and diphthongal ay. Notice the muting of s to z in "leaves" and "things," then turned acute in "fresh thoughts"; notice also the subtle introduction of the Greek cry of woe—ay—in "like." The two sounds are to fuse soon in a perfect correlation with the sense of sorrow in the word

"sigh."

Hopkins knew his Homer, and Homer's epithet for grief is "chilly." The hissing of s in Hopkins' lines conveys a sense of sleet falling, thus a cold kind of sorrow. If one doubts the validity of this statement, let him consider Hopkins' use of "colder" after "sights," a word which, like "sigh," fuses stridency and diphthongal ay. Diphthongal ay: This sound runs the complete gamut of the phonemic spectrum of vowels in English. It begins as low-back, the most saturated and compact, and ends up as high-front, the most dilute and diffuse. The moral significance, I think, is quite clear: This movement in the diphthong is a symbol of the separation of self from self, the spiritual rending that takes place in man under the stress of suffering. In a way, it is a linguistic equivalent of the human Christ's cry from the cross: "Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani?" ("My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?") If I press this point, it is because Hopkins presses it in his poem: diphthongal ay is the basis for the only tercet rhyme in his texture; and more, this tercet is forecast by repetition of the sound in "By and by," and then immediately echoed in "child."

The strident s comes to perfect expression in "Sorrow's springs are the same." It joins with alliteration and consonance in "ghost guessed" as completion of the textural intensity developed in a syntactical echo of lines three and four. It also looks forward to the most perfect selection of diction in the poem:

"blight." The thing which destroys leaves and infects the soul of man with sorrow. In fact, "blight," because of its alliterative quality in the line and, above all, because of its diphthongal ay, is the brightest seal in the poem upon the genius of Hopkins and his consummate mastery of textural intensity.

The poem ends on a rhythmical echo of "care for, can you?"; "born for" and "mourn for" also repeat the less intense sorrow of "Goldengrove"—the assonance on tense o—and symbolize the more mature and subdued quality of the sorrow of the priest, who has already "come to such sights colder."

Why has the priest "come to such sights colder?" Because he knows, as the child does not, that the source of all sorrow is the self. Grief is selfish; Margaret, unknowingly, is mourning for herself. Thus the moral earned by the textural tension in the poem is valid; it is the lesson which St. Augustine learned through the death of his mother, St. Monica. Hopkins, however, not only knows that grief is selfish, but he also knows that death introduced by the Fall of Man (echoed symbolically in the fall of leaves from a tree) is the product of extreme selfishness. He implies this knowledge in his textural intensity through a hidden rhyme on the name of Eve: "grieving" and "unleaving." Eve: She who brought both death and diphthongal ay into the world by standing under another tree in the Garden of Paradise and listening to the strident s of the Serpent.

From the basic level of sound-patterning to the summit level of philosophic content, "Spring and Fall: To a Young Child" is a masterpiece of the poetic mind. It stands as imperishable evidence to the fact that Gerard Manley Hopkins is an absolute master of textural intensity and that he must rank among the dozen or so greatest artists in the English language.

### Round Table

#### FRESHMAN ENGLISH IN SECTIONS OF 150

WALKER GIBSON

The coming reduction in instructional standards ably described by the late Charles A. Fenton in last May's College English is probably, as Mr. Fenton says, inevitable. For Freshman English courses in large universities, the decline may already be here. Relying as they must on the services of graduate students for much of their teaching, these courses may be expected to yield early and perhaps drastically. More graduate assistants are being hired; they are less advanced in their graduate work; they are less mature and experienced; they are more harassed and distracted. The graduate student is always a risky member of the staff: at his best he covers his inexperience with a pleasing, often effective camaraderie with his students; at his worst he teaches his freshmen what he is learning himself-the dates and names of scholarship and the fashions and terms of advanced criticism. During the next decade we may expect that the inherent weaknesses of the graduate assistant system will intensify, to the general disadvantage of thousands of freshman

At Washington Square College of New York University an attempt has been made over the past year to combat this development by organizing a few sections of freshman composition with very large enrollments—up to 150 or more per section. This has not been a device for saving money (for it has saved none); it has been a device for maintaining and improving standards by saving teaching talent. Each of the large sections has been in the charge of an experienced and devoted teacher of composition and literature, usually a man who is himself actively engaged in professional writing.

He has been assisted, quite literally, by two graduate students who form with him a teaching team, and who read a large part of the students' work. One year of this experience has seemed to support the conclusion others have reached with somewhat similar adventures: it works better than anyone would have thought.

The disadvantages and dangers of such an arrangement are obvious, and they are real. The "Socratic method" is goneexcept as it can occasionally be demonstrated by the lecturer or by an assistant meeting with a small group at a separate time and place. Only in the small group meetings-which have so far been irregular and difficult to arrange-can the shy or backward student be needled into action. It is all too easy, in the large class, for the lazy one to rest easy, fairly secure in the knowledge that he will not be called upon. He does, of course, have to write the next paper, and in this sense, at least, there is almost constant "feedback" from every student. Finally, the discomfort felt by some students that they were being "herded" was genuine and cannot be laughed off.

On the other hand, several less alarming consequences have come to light, and some of them have been surprising. They can be discussed from three points of view: that of the professor-lecturer, of the graduate assistant, and of the freshmen themselves.

From the point of view of the professor-lecturer, a familiar and anticipated difference in this sort of teaching is the added energy and enthusiasm which he must bring to every meeting of the class. In the presence of so many expectant faces, and particularly in the presence of his own graduate assistants (who after all are quite capable of judging his performance adversely), the lecturer must be very much on the qui vive. His preparation must be more thorough; his pace must be brisker and more orderly. When he has a

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bad class, a lot of people know about it. The challenge probably appeals particularly to the sort of teacher who thinks of himself partly as an actor, and certainly the sight of such a vast captive audience is a heady experience for anyone. But it need not be a one-man show. In a typical class, in which for example a mimeographed student paper from the previous assignment is analyzed, or in which a piece of literature is introduced, the possibilities for student response, even "discussion," are still present. One of the lecturer's tasks is to try to extend the range of student response beyond the two dozen most vocal extroverts in the room: in this there has been scanty success. Furthermore there has to be a certain ruthlessness toward mavericks and irrelevant speakers from the floor, and the invitation to "see me about that after class" must be often employed. On the other hand, the active participation of the graduate assistants in the discussion, especially when their remarks qualify or even oppose the position of the lecturer, provides a new and dramatic device for teaching freshmen.

The reading load for the professor is set at twenty papers for each assignment -rather less than he would be grading in one normal section. He usually plucks out twenty papers from the stack at random, and while students have objected to this unpredictability ("I don't know who I'm writing for"), the risk they take is probably a healthy one. In this way too there is a steady check on student performance by more than one reader, and a far more effective communication and agreement about standards among various graders than is usual. It probably follows from these circumstances that grades in the large sections have been running lower than those in conventional sections. Three people grade more severely than one.

An unhappy feature of the professor's role is that he is largely deprived of the experience of seeing individual students develop through the term, since he is constantly reading different student papers, and he simply doesn't "know" his students. Impersonality has its liabilities. The kind of teacher who values very highly an intimate relation with favorite students

would not be happy in this arrangement. One could argue in rebuttal that while he has lost some friendships, he has also been spared some fairly impossible human relations.

From the point of view of the inexperienced graduate assistant, this method is a distinct improvement over conventional arrangements. To begin one's teaching career in this relatively harmless and painless way, and to witness, for better or worse, a veteran teacher at his job, is an experience many of us might have welcomed in our twenties. The assistant is responsible for some 50 to 70 studentslittle more paperwork and counseling than he would be facing anyway if he were conducting two or three small sections on his own. He is largely relieved, of course, of class preparation. He keeps generous office hours, and knows the students well (as the professor does not). Indeed the assistants adopt a first-name relation with many students that under ordinary circumstances might seem uncomfortably chummy, though in this situation it may help to compensate for the impersonality of the large class. Meanwhile, the assistants themselves are subject to a kind of scrutiny and evaluation that no schedule of "visitation" could approach, for they are almost constantly under the eye of their superior. Each assistant, in addition to his meetings with smaller groups among his students, takes over the large class at least three or four times per term, and he does so knowing that he is under critical observation, however sympathetic. The circumstances of public competition that obtain in such a system suggest that without a strong sense of shared values, patience, and teamwork, the effort could quickly fall apart. Little difficulty of this sort appeared during the first year of this experiment.

From the point of view of the freshmen themselves, the advantages are less obvious but apparently real. No elaborate tests were conducted, but so far as the limited evidence goes, the improvement in reading and writing seems to have been about what our conventional sections have been producing, and this seems to be in line with other similar experiments at other institutions. Direct evidence on this ques-

tion will be available in a year or two, when, as Juniors, students who have been exposed to the experiment will undertake a required Proficiency Test in English, in competition with other students who have not been so exposed. Meanwhile, it is already apparent, and surprising, that student morale in the large sections did not generally suffer. Almost no complaints were received by the various college agencies where complaints are familiar. A questionnaire (of the sort Mr. Fenton recommends in his article) was distributed to the largest section (160 freshmen) in January of 1960: the results were encouraging. A number of potentially embarrassing questions were asked, of which perhaps the most telling was: "Do you feel that your improvement in using English was seriously hampered by the large class?" The answers were about 2 to 1 in the negative. When asked whether they would prefer a conventionally sized class, meeting independently with a graduate assistant, rather than the present system, the students voted 3 to 2 in favor of the present system. Comments added by the students-anonymously of course-ranged from predictable complaints about grades (" I feel that the pressure put on the graduate assistants by the professor made them mark harder") to some astonishing endorsements of the large enrollment ("I believe that the more extensive contributions afforded by a greater variety of fellow English students have, collectively, enabled me to search and comprehend more opinions and trends of thought"). One pious student made the point that he had "benefitted" greatly from the "proffessor's" lectures.

It will be inferred from the foregoing that the arrangements described here are inappropriate to two kinds of students: the very good and the very bad. With all due recognition of the limited meaning of test scores, I suggest that the sort of student who earns a verbal SAT score in the 500's and upper 400's can most reasonably profit from such a regime. Low-scoring students need more personal attention, possibly of the sort called "remedial." Highly verbal students can profit from a faster pace, a more intense com-petition with their peers, and more opportunity for individual effort. At Washington Square College such potentially superior students are being segregated at entrance into so-called "honors" sections, of conventional size, and are offered the materials of both Freshman and Sophomore English in one intensive year's course.

As Philip H. Coombs of the Ford Foundation, and many others, have recently been saying, education is "an undynamic, unprogressive industry," unwilling to challenge its traditional assumptions. Mr. Coomb's economics metaphor may not be the happiest one, but his complaint cannot be denied. Assumptions about class size are certainly a case in point, and can arouse the most emotional and defensive postures on the part of teachers. Actually, class size is not so important as many of us have thought. The question, as in all these matters, comes down to the individual human being who is doing the job. Many a high-priced seminar amounts to boredom in a small room. If the experiment now under way at Washington Square College serves to make available its best teachers to more students, and if the ill effects are not too devastating, something profitable may have been accomplished for the "industry."

#### RHETORIC AND THE "PROBLEM" OF COMPOSITION

THOMAS S. KANE

There has been much public alarm recently about the decline of English, particularly the low state of the writing course. The concern comes as no surprise to those of us who teach composition. Mostly, I think, we agree that the composition course, both in high school and college, is not achieving its purpose: we do not generally succeed in teaching our

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students to write clear, idiomatic English. It is easy to rationalize the failure, to argue that, under the conditions of mass education, only the most limited successor perhaps the least extensive failure-remains possible. And there is some truth in the argument. Certainly the times do conspire against us. Classrooms are crowded, and the student-teacher ratio seems steadily to mount; few students read widely, and many students have grown apathetic about acquiring a skill seemingly so remote from the notion of success to which life in a prosperous technocracy has conditioned them; media of mass communication, on the whole, debase rather than enhance the art which we teach. All this is true. Yet there remains unexplained some final reason for the failure. It remains because the fault belongs to us and not to the unsympathetic culture about us. Bluntly, that fault is our own low level of competence. Too many teachers of composition are not teaching composition; too many do not even understand what composition is.

Considering the primacy of language skills to all phases of education, it is remarkable that we pay so little attention to the competence of those who must teach these skills. In no other discipline are people judged capable of teaching with so little technical knowledge of their subject. I sometimes think that even plumbers are better prepared for their jobs. In our larger universities how many sections of composition are taught by overworked, underpaid graduate fellows with small grammar and less rhetoric? Of the recent graduates in education now teaching English in our high schools, how many have really studied the history and structure of the language, much less the subtleties of its many styles?

To answer these questions is to reveal the absurdity that confronts us in any discussion of the "problem of composition." I am not sure how the absurdity arose. Many reasons suggest themselves: the withdrawal of too many university English departments from interest in and control over secondary education; the contemporary disrepute of rhetoric, still too often associated with the floridities of nineteenth-century politics; our preoccupation with literature, revealed in the frequent assertion

that literature is the true business of the college English department and that composition ought to be confined to the high schools or shifted to the history people. Still, when all this has been said, one suspects that the real reason is deeper, and simpler. Teaching students to write is hard work; it is tedious, laborious, and generally unrewarding; and teachers, like other men, avoid the pick and shovel when they can. And so composition courses are passed down the academic ladder until they fall upon those least competent to teach them. Of course composition is, in general, poorly taught. How can it be anything else?

Yet the question need not be rhetorical. Composition can be better taught if we take care to train those who will teach it. Such training is something that we in the universities can do. We cannot abolish television or magically provide enough classrooms to alleviate overcrowding. But we can design a program of studies to train truly professional teachers of English. Preliminary to any such effort we must try to define our subject, to come to some general agreement about what we take composition to be. A fundamental part of our difficulty at the moment is that we do not seem quite certain what we are supposed to be doing, an uncertainty that surely makes us unique among pedagogues. Historians, sociologists, mathematicians-all these members of the faculty agree, on the undergraduate level at least, upon the nature and scope of their subjects. If historians put forward differing interpretations of American history, they agree about what body of facts constitutes American history. Teachers of composition, however, share no such common viewpoint. To some the course seems a sort of clinic for the development of personality through self-expression; to others an intellectual gym where everybody works out on great ideas; to still others a period for close order drill in grammar; and to some an adjunct to literature into which short stories can be smuggled as "models." (Models, one wonders, for whom?) If the meaning of composition is as elastic as this, plainly it has no meaning at all.

It needs, then, to be defined. Composition

is an art. Like any art it may be described as a series of techniques that are the means to the creation of a beautiful and meaningful whole. In composition the end to be attained is the concise and accurate rendering into language of the mind of the writer-his thoughts, emotions, perceptions -so that that mind may be communicated to the reader. The techniques by which this end is achieved concern themselves with the selection of words and their arrangement into meaningful patterns. While they are numerous, these techniques are finite; they can be, and they should be, subjected to the closest analysis and study in order to establish the corpus of our subject. It ought not to be difficult to identify them; they are widely known, and English teachers should be able to agree upon which are essential for the high school senior or the college freshman to have mastered. Certainly, for instance, he should know how to begin a theme and how to end one, employing with reasonable skill such devices as focusing down, initial paradox, cyclic return, metaphor of closing, and variant rhythms. He should know how to develop and unify a paragraph, how to move easily from one paragraph to the next, how to control the speed and rhythm of a sentence, how to apply the concreteness of detail and the nuance of connotation. And how to do anything more that, in the short span of one or two semesters, we can teach him. Obviously the techniques of good writing are manifold and subtle, and some are beyond the capacities of most students. Obviously, too, we shall not all agree perfectly about which are more and which are less important. But there can be little serious dispute about which are elemental to the writing we expect of most college students.

Once we have established what the composition course should include, we can design a program of studies for training those who will teach it. We must not be misled here by the easy belief that any English major already knows how to teach composition. The assumptions that any B.A. in English can (1) write well himself, and (2) convey that skill to others are complacent fictions, false for the graduate students who staff the composition pro-

grams in many of our universities and false for the recently graduated high school English teachers. The fact is that these young people, in the main, are themselves inept in the very art they profess to teach.

They do not have to be. It can hardly be beyond the abilities of English departments to design solid courses in the teaching of prose composition, nor beyond their powers to make these programs mandatory for all potential teachers of English. Such a program should stress the close study of rhetoric, rhetoric not in the sense of extravagant tropes or elaborate syntax, but in the more inclusive sense of all the techniques of good writing. I do not mean here to slight the importance of more general linguistic study. The program I have in mind would include a thorough grounding in the history and the grammar of English. But for the teacher of composition these disciplines should be fundamental, not final; they are the foundations upon which must rest the more important knowledge of rhetoric. Neither an easy familiarity with the dialects of Middle English nor a facility with the terminology of traditional, or of modern, grammar will tell the young instructor what good writing is, and good writing is what he must teach. To teach it he has to become a master rhetorician, able to correct each of the many faults in syntax and style that his students will make.

Still it would be a mistake, I think, to limit the study of rhetoric too narrowly to the immediate problem of the composition section. The art of prose, in itself, is an infinitely complex and endlessly challenging subject. Those who teach it ought to be more encouraged to seek out its subtleties, even though these take them far beyond the limits of the freshman theme. It is worthwhile to study the structure of mimetic sentence rhythm or the interrelations of style and meaning and Zeitgeist, to ponder the nature of metaphor, to analyze the varieties of narrative. If such matters seem remote from the hard realities of English 1, any teacher who has explored them will emerge, strangely enough, a much better teacher of English 1. For the essential characteristic of a good teacher is a profound and abiding involvement with his subject. With this interest he may be excused a good many pedagogical faults; without it he will never be more than glib.

What the "problem" of the writing course finally comes down to, it seems to me, is this: too many of us simply do not know our business. Both in the high school and the university we must begin to take the teaching of composition seriously; in short, to learn the trade and work at it. Admittedly, no amount of rhetorical knowledge and skill will make the teacher a magician. No matter how competent we become, it is in the nature

of things that we shall fail more often than we succeed. Good writing requires more than a mastery of technique; an essay is more than a teapot. Vision and imagination and sensitivity cannot be taught, only kindled by the spark that leaps from mind to mind. Yet imagination undisciplined by the control of technique is also less than art. Techniques we can teach, so that when the spark catches, as now and again it does, its light may shine for all to marvel at. And when no spark glows, those of our students who have nothing to write about but the old platitudes, may at least write about them competently.

#### THE ABOLITION OF FRESHMAN COMPOSITION

#### ALLEN AUSTIN

I wonder whether it would be possible for a number of English department chairmen to express their attitudes toward the proposals made by Warner Rice in his article on the abolition of freshman composition (College English, April 1960). I assume that reform would have to being with these chairmen.

As I understand him, Rice is making a plea for a more effective policy in the teaching of composition, maintaining that the student would be better taught if the entire university assumed the responsibility for student writing. According to this plan, the writing would be related to course substance, to the need for communication, and presumably the student would receive constant criticism of his writing throughout the four years of college.

The present composition course in the humanities program is analogous to a hypothetical "laboratory techniques" course in natural science. One can imagine a chemistry or physics teacher intoning that nothing, absolutely nothing, is more important in science than the mastery of laboratory techniques. But fortunately this

teacher realizes that these techniques cannot be separated from substance, from a knowledge of science. Similarly, writing cannot be separated from substance; in fact, a student's mastery of sentence structure, language, and organization is to some extent indicative of his grasp of the subject. The economics or sociology teacher who tells his students that he doesn't care "how" they say "something" fails to under-stand that this "something" (which involves relationships) is an integral part of the "how." Furthermore, the composition teacher who assigns "pattern" or "personal experience" topics, which emphasize the "skill" of writing, is diluting intellectual training. The student in a literature or history or philosophy course cannot depend on personal experience; he must be able to understand and to express ideas relating to these courses.

Although I agree with Rice on his proposal to abolish composition, I am puzzled by his statement that nothing should be substituted for this course. I must admit that I admire his willingness to give up one of the important sources of the English department's power. Certainly, the addition of courses cannot be defended from the pragmatic point of vested interest. However, I believe that language and

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literature courses (as Paul Roberts suggests) should be added to the curriculum. The student should complete, as part of a liberal education, at least one course in the English language. Furthermore, he should be introduced to the major forms of literature before he enrolls in any kind of survey course. He is not prepared for the survey course until he has learned some basic principles which are preliminary to understanding. We should, in fact, take advantage of this opening to strengthen literary studies and in turn the general education program. The problem would be to include both the literature and the language course in a two-semester schedule.

I suppose the greatest difficulty in getting Rice's proposals accepted would be the natural opposition of the faculty to assuming responsibility for student writing. The English department would have to convince not only the faculty council but also the chairman of each department.

That is, the program would not be likely to succeed if responsibility were left to the conscience of the individual faculty member. Each department should make definite commitments to assign and to criticize student writing. There should be no difficulty in setting up an effective program of faculty education-which would stress that substance, organization, sentence structure, and language constitute the primary problem in writing, and grammar and mechanics, the secondary problem. English teachers should be satisfied to be exclusively specialists in language and literature; all teachers should be specialists in writing.

Rice's proposals constitute the basis for general reform. The question is whether they can be implemented. We should at least know the opinions of some of the people who are in a position to initiate action.

#### DO IT YOURSELF

EDWARD P. J. CORBETT

Instructors of composition courses who are open to suggestions about fruitful techniques might be interested in a system that has proved beneficial both for me and for my students. The next time you assign a theme, try writing the theme yourself. The experience not only will make you appreciate your students' problems but may be good for your soul.

There is some advantage to attempting the theme yourself even before you assign it to your students. Yoy may find that the proposed subject is too cumbersome for the word-limit you usually set on the weekly theme. Furthermore, your preliminary experimenting with theme topics will once and for all cure you of such scintillating subjects as "My Most Embarrassing Moment." If you find yourself becoming slightly nauseated while writing the theme, it is unlikely that your students

will find the subject any more eupeptic than you did. On the other hand, if you find yourself really exhilarated while writing, you may have hit on a stimulating theme topic. Over a period of years, such testing of potential topics will build up for you a list of workable subjects that will give the student a chance to show what he can do with the pen when he is sufficiently challenged and interested.

Two of the commonest complaints about freshman themes are that the treatment of the subject is trite or pedestrian and that it is too generalized. Sometimes, by the subjects we assign, we force our students to be—or at least make it difficult for them to be anything but—trite and general in their treatment of a theme topic. Some subjects naturally gravitate toward the platitude and the commonplace. Other subjects are so broad that in order to develop them in the precise, specific detail which can enlighten and enliven them one would need five thousand words rather than the five hundred that we commonly

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allot our students. Trying our hand at the assigned topic can make us aware of these difficulties with a subject and tolerant of the students' failures in handling it.

If after you have written the theme you have enough pride in your production and enough temerity to submit it to the scrutiny of your students, you can mimeograph the theme and distribute it to the class. By this device, you hope to be able to illustrate a successful handling of the assigned topic—tight, coherent organization; fresh ideas; novel approaches; lively, concrete, apt diction; adequate development of paragraphs; and, let us hope, correct grammar and punctuation. This, you can claim (at the risk, of course, of eliciting a blatant "raspberry" from the back of the room), is an example of an "A" theme.

If you are really rash, you can put your offering into competition with your students' writing. Without revealing the authors of any of the pieces, you can mimeograph two or three of the best student papers, along with your own. After discussing the merits of these papers, you can ask the students to vote for the best paper. Be prepared, however—especially if you are dealing with Honors students—

to have your jewel rated as "the worst." That kind of blow to your pride can make a solitary drinker out of you faster than any other disappointment I know of. On the other hand, if your paper is judged "the best," you can reveal yourself as the author of this gem, and for a few days you will enjoy among your students something of the esteem they accord to the player who makes a backhanded catch of a sizzling line-drive in the crucial game of the World Series. Like everyone else, students are impressed by performance.

There is another advantage to this system: it gives the teacher an opportunity to do some non-professional writing. Unless we keep a diary, many of us get surprisingly little exercise in writing. A major portion of our time is spent reading someone else's writing, and most of our own writing is confined to business or friendly letters or to the two or three major articles we prepare each year for the professional journals. We can easily lose touch with the kind of copy-book writing that we require of our freshmen. We might, by indulging this exercise, revive the art of the familiar essay.

#### GROUP THERAPY FOR THOSE SICK THEMES

PARM MAYER

A recent survey of colleges by Dr. Arthur Waterman of Central Michigan University indicates that most freshmen are not adequately prepared for writing. Only one out of every five college English teachers polled believes entering Freshmen are adequately prepared.

Opinion of some college instructors is that high school teachers by-pass theme writing to avoid the drudgery of theme correction. Regardless of this, it is probably true that English teachers at all teaching levels are confronted with the time-consuming problem of checking, correcting, and grading themes.

An instructor of English at Northwood Institute, Alma, Michigan, Mr. Mayer is a widely published short-story writer and poet. Possibly I can offer something that might be helpful. I call it group therapy in the teaching of composition.

The procedure is this: I first look over a set of themes, noting the general trend toward excellence, or the lack of it. Then I read each one, indicating significant errors. Finally, I assign a grade.

When I am through with the pack, I go back through it, noting errors which were made repeatedly. I write these down and make notes for use in group correction. Before handing the themes back, I take ten to twenty minutes in class to go over the mistakes that were made and explain what to do to avoid them.

This procedure saves time in correcting papers, since the teacher does not need to make extended explanation on each paper. After correcting the error once or twice on an individual paper, he can merely indicate it with either a check mark or a code mark—reserving the extended cor-

rection for group procedure.

Students accept group correction willingly, sensing that they are not the only ones who made the mistake. They also seem to respond as well to group correction as to individual. However, individual help may still be necessary in some cases, and if so should be given.

An example of group therapy in the teaching of composition will further clarify

what I'm saving.

The assignment: Relating the Specific to the General. The students are to write five general statements and support each

one with specific details.

Example: Michigan is a vacation land. The state is almost surrounded by great lakes which provide opportunity to swim, fish, and cruise. Smaller lakes are generously distributed in the interior of the state, offering further means to relax, recreate, and escape the summer sun. In winter, too, diversified recreation is available, such as hunting, skiing, and ice fishing.

After the themes are turned in, I do as I have said. I look them over to get an idea of their general quality. Then I go over each one, indicating representative errors, making a correction at least once. Then I note the areas of error, jot them down with examples of the error, and finish with notes on what I intend to say about correcting them. Before handing back the themes, I spend the first part of the class in what I call group therapy.

I start in with making it clear what the assignment was. Usually, some students do not understand the assignment, even though I try to explain it clearly and have them copy it down from written directions on

the board.

Next, I give examples of wrong ways the assignment was done, without mentioning names. In the assignment specified, I cite general statements which are not general. Example: The girl has a birthmark on her cheek. I point out that this is a specific one in this subject category. Example: The girl's face is one you would not easily forget.

It is easy now to see that the statement about the birthmark should follow the one about the face—not start the paragraph

as a topic sentence.

Another mistake some students make is that they do not follow the general statement with related details. Example: Engines make a car accelerate. They follow it with something liks this: Engines have many parts and come in various styles.

It is obvious (after I point it out) that the statement about engines having many parts and coming in various styles is not coherent with the one saying that an engine accelerates a car. In fact, both

statements are general.

Some students confuse subjects with general statements. Examples: My radio, Autumn, and A squirrel are turned in as

general statements.

I correct this by explaining that these are subjects and not general statements and show how they could be converted into general statements. Example: My radio is a source of information and entertainment. Autumn is a colorful time of year. A squirrel is fascinating to watch. Each, to be followed by specific details.

After I have covered the major errors in the manner I have illustrated, I take up mechanical ones such as spelling, letter formation (if written by hand), its and it's, verb tense, etc.—giving in each case examples of the error and its correction.

Following the treatment of errors, I give a proportionate amount of time to talking about and giving examples of whatis-right-and-good about the themes. This is not only fair but is highly conductive

to class morale.

That this method of teaching is effective is shown by the improvement in the students' work in a three-month's term. In nearly every case, improvement in ability to write is noticeable. Study based on controlled situations would be necessary to prove which method is more effective, detailed individual correction or group therapy. Careful observation, however, plus considerable experience, has convinced me that the group method (with individual aspects) is equal to, possibly superior to, singly-applied endeavor.

Students, too, seem to be satisfied with the emphasis on group procedure. A few days ago, a student said to me, "I can see my mistakes after you point them out to us." Then added, "Why don't you tell them to us before we do our themes?"

I said, without smiling, "I would if I knew in advance what mistakes you are

going to make."

It is somewhat like the student who asked the librarian, "Where do you keep

the missing books?"

Actually, I do try to give definite help in how to do an assignment before the students do it, but often they don't listen carefully, perhaps have the feeling: We know, we know; why is he taking our time.

After they see how many mistakes they have made, they are more humble and listen attentively. Thus, a learning process takes place through an inverse kind of teaching.

Having trouble with "sick" themes? Tired of having students ignore the corrections you slave to make on their papers? About ready to make an apostrophe to math? Try group therapy!

#### THE B<sup>3</sup> PROPORTION

JACK C. GRAY

Particularly difficult in teaching composition is getting the student to understand that there is a logic in the rules of grammar and sentence structure with which he and his harassed teacher must contend. The attempt to translate the grammatical logic of English sentences to mathematical formulae as reported by Frederick H. Candelaria in the April, 1960, issue of College English struck me with its simplicity and directness. Drawing a parallel with mathematics, where the necessity of a tightly controlled system of logic is more readily apparent to many students, helps to make visual the similar necessity in grammatical logic.

I think one of the reasons so many students—and some teachers—are often contemptuous of the seeming pettiness of the rules of grammar is that they do not know the why of the rules. Brown, Brown, and Bailey in their book, Form in Modern English (1958), give an excellent definition of what grammar is: "The study of a system of language code symbols and the meanings these symbols express" (p. 7). As an addendum to Candelaria's system, I should like to propose a mathematical

formula, really an equation, designed to aid the student in understanding what this definition of grammar fully signifies.

Brown, Brown, and Bailey show that some mathematical symbols such as plus, minus, and equal signs indicate relationships among other mathematical symbols that indicate quantities, such as "x" and "y." The former symbols are the glue that keep the latter symbols arranged about one another in an orderly fashion. So it is with grammar and words in a sentence.

Since our formula is derived from Brown, Brown, and Bailey, we may refer to it as the B<sup>3</sup> Proportion. If the instructor has a flair for the histrionic, he might even wear a white smock as he expounds. The B<sup>3</sup> Proportion is: mathematical symbols used to denote quantities are to mathematical symbols used to denote relationships as the words in a sentence are to the grammar in that sentence. More concisely, it is stated:

$$\frac{MS (quan)}{MS (rel)} = \frac{W}{G}$$

The student is sometimes so shocked to see grammar treated as a precise and logical science—which it sometimes is—instead of merely as a cotton-headed parcel of arbitrary rules that he is often encouraged to ask questions even about the logic in back of his own sentences.

Mr. Gray teaches at Northern Illinois University and writes that he is at work on the Ph.D. and articles on Romeo and Juliet and the novels of C. P. Snow.

#### THE COMPLETE WORKS IN ENGLISH OF W- G-

JOHN T. FLAUTZ

Mr. W- G-, the author of the following essays, was a university student, the graduate of an accredited high school. He is no longer a student. He lasted just one term, but he did get an A, in Archery. Arithmetic demonstrates that one in five of Mr. G-'s undergraduate grades were A's, and a fair number of Ph.D.'s can't match that. Thus Mr. G- is not to be scoffed at, academically, nor is it my purpose here to scoff at him. I call my collection of his work complete because it is patent that he had never written anything before, and because I hope to heaven he will never write anything again; but anyone familiar with freshman writing, and particularly remedial writing, will see at once that Mr. G- displays a melancholy and touching sincerity rarely found there. Neither do I particularly want to know what afflicted the boy. I can see, for example, that much of his bizarre orthography is the result of inability to correlate his auditory impressions with symbols on paper ("We had linguists hope that she would come.") but the pathology of the case is out of my line. My real purpose is to demonstrate as forcefully as possible the reason why conversation among Freshman English instructors so often dwells on the advantages of chicken ranching in the Pelew Islands, why many a fledgling scholar girds on his new degree and fares forth, only to wind up a few months later an aimless coverlet-plucker, suffering from the persistent delusion that his brain has been set out to soak in a tank full of tadpoles.

The first essay was written on the first day of class-Remedial English class. Things have never been quite the same since.

What my parents expect of me

What my parents expect of me? is hard to say, but they whant me to try to stay in school and work hard to try to make my greads, they would all so like to have me to be good. Keep clean be nice to get along

with. Keep my room clean they all so Would like me to get English. And not to driy my car during the week and gust use it to come home an week ends. they also would like to have me try to stay out of trouble and not drink smoke or cose any kind of trouble, they expect me to eat three meals a day and not thry to see how far I cam make my money go. and a nother thing they would like to have me come home on week ends to halp them with the work because we live on a big farm. speek of the farm this summer the expect me to try to do work as I postable for me to do by myself. the expect me to try to take charge of my little sister when they are not home. they all so expect me to trey to Keep an eye on my dog which like to run away from home and keep and ave om my uncle who is now 78 years old as you can see it have try to rase hus as pusable but some the even the leist plain thing doss not work they above all try to make me a happy as possable as you see many of the thing that they expect did work because like here I am seat in 22 south hall in a class Room English 59 just because I did not work hard at English mybe if I would have work harder this might not have happen to me but who know mybe evem if I would have Work harder. I might still be in English 59 or even in English 160 there is no one to bleom but me and only me my mother and dad tould me this would happen if I did not get on the ball. I did not listen so it happen. So. even if you thing it can not happen it will when the were tell me these things I did not belave them but I gest they were "righ". sho ewen if you think you know even things just stop and thing this might happen to you.

It might, at that. I suspect that it already has. The next essay, too, was written in class. The assignment was to develop a paragraph from a topic sentence provided by me, and suggested by the week's reading assignment. It should be evident that the first sentence is copied scrupulously from the blackboard.

I believe that learning English (is was) my "mental block." Yes Enghisl has all ways been hard for me. My trouble begain the first year I had English. But all the rest of my subject came to me. I would not study English at all I would work on avery

Mr. Flautz's thumbnail self-portrait: "Instructor (English), Kent State U.; life-long Obio resident; age 30; one wife, two daughters, one cat, and one mortgage."

thing but not Enghish. This start went I was a freshman in high school this teacher put me in with a class of chrildern that Enghisl was easy for. From that day on I wouldn't care if I pass English or not this is one of the big reson why laim im Enghisl 59. This is why I feel that if a person does not like a subject he will form a mental

A picture begins to emerge here of Mr. G- as a sensitive, reticent soul whose awareness of his own shortcomings has made him tolerant even of those things which he doesn't understand. The job of telling such a student, week after week, that he is a total failure has caused more than one instructor to wonder whether he might not be happier stealing pension \*checks from mailboxes.

The next paragraph is the result of an experiment. I hoped that by suggesting ridiculous titles I might divert the class and its adoration of the almighty cliché and stimulate at least a little imaginative effort. With age comes wisdom.

Trees are ugly

Yes Trees are ugly because they lose there leavies in the winter time. So after they have losed there leavies they look like they are die. So this makes the country side like dull. Thiss is why I would lake to cut down all of the trees that lose there leavies in winter. So they would make the country side look a lot better, just not in summer and spring.

In what may have been a hysterical reaction from the results of the "imaginative" theme, I fell back on some old reliable titles for the next one.

#### An ideal Class (or course)

An ideal class is were the professor can get his ideas across to the students. This means the class will listen to him and try to pick up whate he is talking about. Some times the professor cann't carry on a good Group discerning so the student in class last instrosest in the class. So I but that ideal class is were everybody talks and puts his

Next, a vocabulary test. The words are taken from a reading assignment. The students were to have looked up their definitions.

1. We had study astrology last night, because the stars were out bright.

- 2. We did out work vice versa today.
- 3. We had linguists hope that she would
- 4. They had conformity in hope that it would help us all
- 5. We had nuances all night long, for the sound that did not come.
- 6. It was a drastically change in the weather.
- 7. They would rigorous in hope to stay at home.
- 8. It was not very easy for us to metaphysical.
- 9. We saw how tangible they were to each other.
- 10. The boy tautologies like he did not know what was happen.
- 11. It was intuition for us to understand.
- 12. In writing sentence grammar is very important.

Waiting, hoping, struggling-the germ of a preliterate epic is here. The difficulty with it is that it is impossible simply to skim over it and mark errors. A sentence like, "We had nuances all night long," is likely to nudge an already bored teacher into areas of speculation which are neither profitable nor entirely healthy. But it is equally impossible not to sympathize. There are days when not only my work but everything I lay hand to seems to be done vice versa, when it is not at all easy for me to metaphysical, and I tautologies all around exactly like I did not know what was happen.

Near the end of the term I gave a short general information quiz to fifty-seven students in two remedial sections. If the test had a purpose it was only to demonstrate to the students how far they were from being educated. There were fifteen questions. The high score was eleven; the average score was 4.75; the low score was zero. Mr. G-'s score was two, which should convince any doubters that I am not really scraping the bottom when I offer his example. These are some of the questions, the number of correct answers to each, and any facts about the answers that seem particularly illuminating.

- 2. Name any symphonic composer. 14. (Mr. G .-: shoebeart.)
- 4. Name any novelist who did not write
- in English. 3. (Mr. G-: shearphere.)
  5. Name any Renaissance painter. 4. (Seventeen different wrong ways to spell Michelangelo.)

- Name any American painter. 24. (Norman Rockwell licked Grandma Moses, 12 to 11.)
- Name any American playwright. 9. (Marilyn Monroe's husband won hands down, even though some of those who knew his name couldn't spell it.)
- Name any American scientist. 21. (The
  most popular correct answers were Von
  Braun and Einstein. With a single exception, the students knew only one
  homegrown scientist, Jonas Salk. The
  exception was who else but Mr. G-,
  who named his biology teacher. The
  workings of some minds are simply inscrutable to ordinary mortals.)
- Name the present Chi<sup>-</sup>f Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. 31. (Four votes for John Marshall. Either the History people have been too efficient or some students are farther behind than we realize.)

Here is Mr. G-'s last bow, his final composition test.

Yes, I have made a really close friend since I came to college. His name is Jhon S.— he is from D.—, Ohio. The first time we meate, was the first weak of school. Because both of use live in the same house. He

is not my room mate, But he live just across the hall with a Boy from S..., Ohio. Jhon and I ride home ever week together. One week he drive and the other week I drive. We go every place to gether around campus. If one of us have a date we try to get the other a date too. So as you can see this is just more than a really close friend ship.

When we goth go home we try to go som place together if it is only to a show or the bowling alleys.

You might think we both live in the same town but you are worng. Jhon lived in D\_ and I live in C\_, Ohio. The towns are about three to four miles apart. But we never mate before the first week of school.

An almost eerily appropriate finale, isn't it? Well, they say we learn from our students, so until they come to take me away I intend to follow the precepts of Mr. G.. Whenever, in the future, I carry on a group discerning, I shall thry as much as postable, or pusable—no, possable—to put my two cents; and even though I'm afraid it will make the country side like dull, I shall never, never mate before the first week of school.

#### COGNATE OBJECT

#### RAY MIZER

True, love, you have a way with words. Away with words! I would have you, Both subject and object; or else With linking verb (Subjective complement!) In happy case and all sweet syntax be, In perfect agreement, That pure infinitive, The subject understood.

You I would have,
Demonstrative if possible,
And possessive; intensive you,
So substantive, so causative.
O fair conjunction this!
The gender right past doubt.
O most emphatic conjugation!
Unmodified, absolute,
Beyond comparison.

Associate Professor of English at DePaul University (Greencastle, Indiana), Dr. Mizer is the author of a number of poems in a variety of publications, including American Bard, Beloit Poetry Journal, and College English.

# Counciletter

RUTH G. STRICKLAND

Three recent publications stimulate and challenge the thinking of English teachers who are striving to improve the teaching of English at all school levels and to improve college programs for the preparation of teachers of English. They help us to see our task in the light of the needs and possibilities of this period of scientific and cultural revolution. They may add strength to our efforts to interpret our problems and aspirations to political and cultural leaders and to the general public.

The report of the President's Commission on National Goals published under the title, Goals for Americans, contains material all of us need to study. The chapter on "National Goals in Education," by John W. Gardner, President of the Carnegie Foundation, has outlined a concrete program for a decade, much of which applies to us and our teaching. He emphasizes the national responsibility to provide equality of opportunity to all of our children, which means to us the need for qualified teachers of English, together with teaching conditions and loads which make good teaching possible. In his consideration of curriculum, Dr. Gardner ranks reading the most important subject of the elementary school and states that the first step to improve the teaching of reading is to improve the teachers. He considers it a mistake to permit any teacher to teach reading who has not "had courses in the specific methods of teaching reading" so that he knows how to provide opportunity and guidance for each child to move as swiftly as his capacities permit and how to give the slow learners thorough attention. His first requirement for a high school teacher of English is competence in teaching composition. This requirement cannot be met by teachers who are overloaded and he recommends that no teacher handle more than 100 students. All of this is in accord with state-

ments in our own very significant new publication, The National Interest and the Teaching of English. As specialists in English, we are deeply concerned with the teaching of reading and of composition. Teachers in the elementary school realize, however, that good teaching of reading requires good teaching of all aspects of language. Competent teaching of composition in the high school is of great importance but equally important is competent teaching of literature and language. Skills cannot exist apart from content and from the medium in which they operate. We can accept the challenge in Dr. Gardner's report and still fit it into our larger concept of our task.

There is material for us in LIFE Magazine's symposium on The National Purpose. In the authors' analysis of the framework within which our culture has developed and the purposes which are inherent in all of our national effort there is both challenge and inspiration. The nation-wide questioning of national purpose, Albert Wohlstetter tells us, indicates that we are in trouble and need to look again at the purposes stated by the founders of our republic and appraise them in the light of today's needs. A purpose is not a wish, a dream, or a mission. ". . . . One fundamental purpose of a democracy is the exercise of reasoned choice, the conscious shaping of events. . . . If the hard problems of our time stir us to more reflective choice, then they will have helped us fulfill one important purpose of a democratic society."

In the introduction to his report on The Process of Education, Dr. Jerome S. Bruner of Harvard says, "Each new generation gives new form to the aspirations that shape education in its time. What may be emerging as a mark of our own generation is a widespread renewal of concern for the quality and intellectual aims of education—but without abandonment of the ideal that education should serve as a means of training well-balanced citizens for a democracy." The profound scientific revolution

Dr. Strickland, Professor of Education at Indiana University, served as president of NCTE during 1960.

of our times is causing many people to ask, "What shall we teach and to what end?" This book is the outgrowth of a conference held at Woods Hole on Cape Cod in September of 1959, in which thirty-five scientists, scholars, and educators discussed how education in science might be improved in our primary and secondary schools. Teachers of English will be interested in studying this report because all of it is as applicable to our teaching of English as it is to the teaching of science and mathematics, the fields from which the major examples in the book are drawn.

The chapter on "Readiness for Learning" begins with this hypothesis: that any subject can be taught effectively in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development. In order to do this one must represent the structure of that subject in terms of the child's way of viewing things and that way differs as the child grows and matures. The members of the conference believe that in the teaching of any subject it may be as important to develop intuitive thinking as to develop analytical thinking. Certainly we need both in the field of English. The creative writer, the literary critic, and the child struggling to express his ideas need confidence in their own intuitions in order to build courageous taste. Schools tend, the author tells us, to emphasize the acquisition of factual knowledge, since that can be most easily evaluated, at the expense of the development

of the kind of intuition that propels the great scientist, writer or artist into his finest thought and effort.

Inherent in this report of the thinking of scholars is a point of view diametrically opposed to that of a few other scholars who would have the school drill on facts and manipulation of processes during the early years and strive to develop thinking and reasoning later on. The scholars who attended the conference at Woods Hole believe that every year is important for the building of basic concepts and ideals as well as the skills that are essential to our way of life.

The Executive Committee of the National Council of Teachers of English appointed a committee which gathered evidence of the critical deficiencies and chaotic standards that prevail in the training of English teachers and the effect of this chaos on the level of learning in the nation's elementary and high schools. Since the teaching of English is basic to the entire educational program it is the hope of the Council that the findings which are presented in the publication, The National Interest and the Teaching of English: a Report to the Profession, will stimulate nation-wide interest in the provision of resources for research and improvement in the teaching of English. All of us, from teachers of kindergarten to teachers in graduate schools, have a stake in the outcome of this important effort of the Council.

#### NCTE College Section: 1961 Nominations

In May, Council members of the College Section will receive mail ballots for electing two members of the Section Committee and two Directors of the Council to represent the Section. In accordance with the requirements of the NCTE Constitution, the names of the persons chosen by the Nominating Committee are printed below. Additional nominees may be named by a petition signed by fifteen (15) members of the Council.

College Section Committee (Two to be elected)
John C. McGalliard, University of Iowa
James H. Sledd, Northwestern University
Kester Svendsen, University of Oregon
W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., Yale University

Directors Representing the College Section (Two to be elected)

James J. Lynch, University of California, Berkeley

Edward Stone, Ohio University
George D. Stout, Washington University, St.
Louis

Arlin Turner, Duke University

This year's Nominating Committee consisted of Frederick Gwynn (Trinity College), Albert Kitzhaber (Dartmouth College), and John Gerber (State University of Iowa), Chairman.

# Rebuttal

# MR. PAUL ROBERTS' "THE RELATION OF LINGUISTICS TO THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH"

One would have to be over thirty-five to remember that there was once something called semantics which was hailed as an educational penicillin; it would cure bad logic, illiteracy, and warts. However, as soon as the true believers got hoarse, and men pointed out its more obvious fallacies, semantics declined and died.

So now with linguistics. It is declining, and Mr. Roberts' essay on linguistics and English teaching points the way to its natural death. However, a dogma always has a little sting left in it. Perhaps this rebuttal may help to give linguistics a final kick into oblivion. Mr. Roberts makes

four errors. They are as follows:

First, he says that "the great contribution of linguistics" is that it gives the English teacher "a subject matter." But Mr. Roberts himself does not know what the subject matter is! He states clearly that "neither linguistics nor anything else" can supply the definitions that traditional grammar now gives us. Nowhere in his essay can one discover precisely the nature of this new subject matter and how it is going to be taught. This situation will lead to chaos. If a teacher cannot present with clarity the basic principles of a subject, his students won't have the faintest idea where to begin their practical work. They will blunder about in a sea of contradictory generalities.

Second, Mr. Roberts states that traditional grammar does not work, that its definitions "are altogether unusable and that in fact nobody ever uses them." This is like saying: "No one is sexually chaste any more; there is not a single virgin left in the United States." The fact is that English teachers do use traditional grammar. They have to. There is no other way to present English fundamentals to the student. In 15 years of being concerned with this subject, I have not known a single teacher who ignores traditional grammar. Surely linguists know this too. Why do they continue with their favorite Big Fib about English teachers?

Third, Mr. Roberts states that there is

"no visible aristocracy" to enforce language dicta. This is the most easily refuted of his arguments. For unless the English teacher, like the old soldier, is slowly fading away, he is the most visible and therefore the most obvious aristocrat of the language. And there are the textbooks (there are a few good ones left). There are also magazines like Harper's, Atlantic, Mad-but it is useless to continue. The dilemma is a false one. While one is fretting about whether to teach a student Upper New York Vulgate or Middle Class Virginian Standard, another student has learned his English from a more competent teacher who is dictatorial, aristocratic, and damned mean about his charges getting things right.

Fourth, Mr. Roberts states that his "commitment is scientific." It is nothing of the sort. I devoutly wish that at some time in his educational career, every American professor could work at a "hard" science. Then perhaps academicians would have a clearer idea of the important distinction

between science and art.

There is no such thing as Science. There is science<sub>1</sub>, science<sub>2</sub>, science<sub>3</sub>, etc. Then there are subsciences. For example, mineralogy and seismic geophysics are geological subsciences. In addition, there are many subsciences of both seismic geophysics and mineralogy. The latter is a "hard" science; that is, (1) similar experiments on similar mineralogical materials tend to yield similar results; and (2) the mineralogist's personal influence on his experiments is relatively small. In "soft" sciences, like seismic geophysics, (1) and (2) are less true. In language studies, (1) and (2) are not true at all.

Men are wrong to label as science the disciplines of economics, anthropology, psychology, linguistics, etc. These are arts, if they are anything. They cannot be experimented upon, as I defined in (1) above; and the "experimenter's" personality in such disciplines is of prime importance. What

Mr. Roberts seems to want in language study is the objective certainty that he could have with, for instance, a particular application of analytical chemistry. This no one can have.

Language and literature are esthetic matters. They must be treated as such. If we fall into the gaping, bottomless hole of scientism, our discipline will go the way of astrology, semantics, and (shortly) linguistics.

A. M. Tibbetts

Air University

#### ANSWER TO MR. TIBBETTS

Though I appreciate the opportunity to reply to Mr. Tibbetts' rebuttal of my article, I really don't know what it is that I am to answer. Mr. Tibbetts does not address himself to my arguments and makes none of his own. He makes several statements: that linguistics is dying, that I don't

know what the content of linguistics is, that teachers do too use traditional grammar, that English teachers constitute the true aristocracy, that linguistics is not scientific. These are declarations, not arguments. Three of them stem apparently from careless reading of my article.

I regret that no more serious rebuttal to the views I expressed has appeared. These are serious matters. If my views are fallacious, the fallacies should be pointed out. If not, the situation should be confronted. Nothing is gained, surely, from just reiterating that those who share my views are foolish or malicious. If that were all we were, we would be no problem to anyone.

Certainly I should like to hear the other side argued logically and dispassionately. Perhaps Mr. Tibbetts himself, in calmer mood, might put his hand to this.

Paul Roberts

Rome

#### **PRONUNCIATION**

The editors of Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, in a prefatory section headed "Pronunciation," assure the reader that the pronunciations the dictionary gives reflect a "large body of firsthand information specially gathered . . . from scores of persons in all parts of the United States and elsewhere in the English-speaking world." However, the acceptable pronunciations given for such words as "ablution," "assume," "lute," "revolution," and "salute" (to cite five examples from many) reflect only the pronunciation of a relatively small section of this country, because the NCD gives only the long u (IPA diphthong symbols ju or 111) requiring that these words be pronounced: ab.lu'shun, a.sum', lut, rev.o.lu' shun, and sa.lut'. Generally, one does not hear these words pronounced this way but only with the long double o (IPA vowel symbol u): ab loo'shan, a soom', loot, rev' o loo' shon, and so loot'. (See Kenyon and Knott, A Pronouncing Dictionary of American English, for phonetic spellings of all words cited in this letter.)

That the NCD editors are aware of other pronunciations for these words, and many more with the u and oo variance, is evidenced by statements in the dictionary's prefatory "Guide to Pronunciation" that

the u sound represents the pronunciation of "cultivated" and "educated" people: "After I (lute) usage is divided both in England and in America, the pronunciations lute and loot both being in good use"; and "After tongue-point fricatives . . . cultivated speakers in both England and America often suppress the first element of the u leaving oo alone: a. soom', etc."; and in ". . . tongue-point stops and nasal [duty, tune] . . . the oo sound is widely used by the educated." Despite these statements, only the long u is shown in the pronunciation of "lute," "assume," "duty," and "tune" in the body of the dictionary. Certainly this important distinction should not be relegated to a dictionary's little-read and seldom-used prefatory section; but, wherever such distinctions do exist, they ought to be reflected in the body of the diction-

The "Guide to Pronunciation" also states, quite rightly, that a "pronunciation is correct when it is in actual use by a sufficient number of cultivated speakers," and adds, "The function of a pronouncing dictionary is to record as far as possible the pronunciations prevailing in the best present usage, rather than to attempt to dictate what that usage should be." Since it appears from the

preface that the editors of the NCD are aware that a sufficient number of cultivated speakers, in this country at least, use the u sound rather than the ju, ru sounds in the numerous words given above, the only reason for the omission of the u sound appears to be a desire on their part to dictate the pronunciation used in a small section of the country rather than to record that of a much larger area.

Neither The American College Dictionary nor Webster's New World Dictionary gives only the long u in any of the examples already cited. On the contrary, the long

double o is always shown by both dictionaries. The long u is not given by either the ACD or the NWD in the words "ablution" and "pollute" for which the NCD gives only the long u. The ACD gives only the long double o in "assume." The ACD also gives only the long double o in such words as "involute," "lucid," "ob-volute," revolution," and "salute." These words are "tongue twisters" when pronounced with the long u, the only sound given by the NCD.

Charles N. Somers

University of Maryland

#### CAN THERE STILL BE ANY DOUBTS ABOUT TELEVISION?

In the December 1960 issue of College English, Professor Barriss Mills expresses serious doubts about the efficacy of teaching by means of television. "The television teacher," he insists, "is in danger of being cut off from the sources of his art and its development-the minds of his students. . . ." And he seems to regret the fact that, as part of a television audience, the students will no longer be able to question or to "talk back" to the teacher. But it seems to me that Professor Mills has overlooked the advantages of such a situation. Having taken part in an experimental program in teaching through television, I would like to present the other side of the question, and argue that what is being urged as a main reason to "persuade immediate war" against television should "dissuade" us most.

One of the most rewarding aspects of my career as a Master Teacher on television was the absence of those querulous faces which Professor Mills seems to enjoy so much. In twenty-five years in the classroom I have yet to hear a question which did not reveal the abysmal ignorance of the student. Nor do I see why we should regret the absence of those students' eyes which, as Professor Mills admits, often "wonder, and cloud over with boredom." I will grant that in my younger days I may have profited a little from the students' "failure to understand" as well as from "their inspired guesses." But that time is past. I hope that I do not seem presumptuous in saying that after a quarter of a century of teaching there is nothing

that the students can tell me about my subject.

Another objection to television is that the teachers may become "virtuosi cut off from everything but applause . . . [and will] listen more and more to the technicians and the audio-visual experts rather than their students." In this statement I detect a derogatory tone towards technicians which, I cannot help believing, stems from a lack of experience with the television media. Had Professor Mills worked closely with these technicians, he too might come to see that the audio-visual men can tell us a great deal about voice control, effective pauses, inflections, and even facial expressions. In fact, by learning a few tricks about raising my eyebrows I was able to get my television audience to laugh at the very same ironic comments which, for the past twenty-five years, have passed over the heads of my classroom students. Can one seriously doubt that we teachers have more to learn from these professional, highly paid experts than from the fumbling answers and inane questions of sophomores?

And what is wrong with applause? If, as Professor Mills admits, "good teaching is an art," shouldn't the master teacher be given the respect and even the fan mail which other artists receive? I wish that Professor Mills could compare the wonderful letters I received when I gave my course on television with the disagreeable questions that I receive now that I am back

in the classroom.

And finally, I would like to call attention to what, I believe, is at the bottom of Professor Mills' stubborn refusal to walk out of the outmoded classroom. Like so many of the critics of television, Mills places a great deal of emphasis on the teacher's "silences, hesitations, fumblings towards truth... searching with his students for something not yet fully known..." I do not, of course, wish to cast any aspersions on the Professor's professional competence; but I cannot help thinking that if he really is uncertain about his material, he should remain in the classroom. For there is indeed no room on a television program for an instructor who, like his

students, is fumbling with uncertainties. But let us hope there will soon come a time when Professor Mills will have mastered his subject and stopped "searching with his students for something not yet fully known." He will then be able to present his material in a clear, straightforward manner, without confusing the students with unanswered questions. And when that time comes, he too will be ready to enter television as a Master Teacher.

J. Burlington Sloe (Lawrence W. Hyman)

Brooklyn College

#### JOYCE'S PATTERN OF PARALYSIS IN DUBLINERS

Florence Walzl's "Pattern of Paralysis in Joyce's Dubliners" (College English, Jan. 1961) is in several respects seriously incomplete and misleading. That Joyce himself chose to publish Dubliners as the organic sequence of fifteen stories which it is, and not as a truncated and subdivided 3-4-4-3 scheme, however appealing the conception of "a symmetrically balanced four-part grouping" may be, must be acknowledged as evidence of his surpassing genius. Professor Walzl treats "The Dead," "as a later addition" which supposedly "obscures Joyce's early pattern," only "incidentally," though the fifteenth story is not only Joyce's finest, but of supreme importance to the book's paralytic progression and its spiral of cumulative awareness. It is Gabriel Conroy who most nearly comprehends the liberating vitality which underlies the conclusion that "the prognosis for the patient is death"; in him alone the "shock of recognition"-as Melville's phrase aptly continues -"runs the whole circle round"; and any interpretation of Dubliners which underplays "The Dead" as absolutely essential to the perfection of Joyce's scheme falsifies his accomplishment.

Professor Walzl's ingenious assignment of specific "paralytic sub-images" or "plot images" exclusive to each group of stories proves indeed largely abortive. Having asserted that the paralytic sub-image of the second group is "entrapment" or "the trap," while "sterility dominates the third group," she slips into admitting that Farrington, in "Counterparts" (third group), is "trapped

by economic need and too weak to rebel." Is Chandler in "A Little Cloud" (third group) any less trapped than Eveline in the story by that name (second group)? Is not Mary in "Clay" (third group) trapped by her unattractiveness? Or, for that matter, do not "The Sisters" demonstrate "sterility" as much as "disillusionment"?

The thematic distance between the opening story, "The Sisters," and the last two stories, "Grace" and "The Dead," is not as great as Professor Walzl's article would have it. She maintains that "at the end Joyce suggests, as he had in all the stories of public life (fourth group), that people who live meaningless lives of inactivity are the real dead," which is certainly inherent even in the first story. To say that "The Sisters" is but "a story of physical paralysis having moral overtones," means to overlook the fact that the paralytic is an unspiritual priest who long ago broke the chalice ("that was the beginning of it") and is referred to as a "simoniac," and the description of "Grace" as a story of "spiritual paralysis having physical effects" gives therefore an illusory sense of inversion rather than of correspondence and pro-

As to the concept of "paralysis," while Professor Walzl quotes secondary and tertiary sources illuminating it, she fails to draw attention to the fact that Joyce introduced the term outright into the first story of the sequence, and only there, indeed in the opening paragraph, and that he did so after the separate printing of "The Sisters" in *The Irish Homestead*, in a carefully revised and expanded version. Such deliberate keynoting of the book's theme is all the more worth noting because Joyce's prelude identifies "paralysis" with "gnomon" (as well as with "simony"), which as a slanted and incomplete, disabled square is the geometrical and literary equivalent—the epiphanic Joycean pattern—of the paralyzed human condition.

Incidentally, Professor Walzl states that "the original fourteen stories are all brief, objective episodes whose significance is largely implied." As a matter of fact, the first three stories, relating experiences of apparently orphaned boyhood, are all told in the subjective first person, past tense; this focus is abandoned for an enlarged third-person observation in all the subsequent stories, though in "The Dead" Joyce manages to create the illusion of both a sweeping objective and an intensely subjective comprehension.

Gerhard Friedrich

Cedar Crest College

#### REPLY ON DUBLINERS

My purpose was to study the relationship of symbolism and structure in the 1905 arrangement of stories in Dubliners, with the balanced opening and close dealing with the theological virtues, rather than the changes effected by the later addition of "The Dead." Note my subtitle "A Study of the Original Framework." I agree that "The Dead" changes the effect of Dubliners: its greater length and development do that alone. However, in the relation of plot structure to theme, I feel that "The Dead" very brilliantly complements Joyce's basic plan in the 1905 version. Its plot combines double epiphanies, each of which is anticipated in the earlier structure of the book. Like the early stories (up to the pivotal eighth), "The Dead" presents a revelation to the individual about himself. Like the final stories it presents also an epiphany which exposes a culturally sterile society.

As to the characters in group three, all are trapped. Note my statement: "These characters are already trapped by life, having made constraining choices earlier" (p. 225). I believe there is a difference in degree of paralysis between groups two and three.

In two ("Eveline," "After the Race," "Two Gallants" and "The Boarding House") the main characters choose or accept the trap at a time in their lives when they could have made revitalizing choices. In group three ("A Little Cloud," "Counterparts," "Clay" and "A Painful Case") the characters are pictured as having been trapped for a considerable time; hence the emphasis is on the sterility of their lives. One, Mr. Duffy, has a second chance, but the paralysis resulting from his earlier deliberate choice makes him incapable of action. The three others are offered no real alternatives.

As to the relation of the opening and close, note my statement that "the first group would have depicted the painful disillusionment of individuals in a decadent society; the last . . . shown social groups too corrupt to be aware of their decadence' (p. 227). I do not think the "thematic distance" great. In fact, I am insisting on thematic similarity. Both opening and close depict a paralyzed society in the persons of older characters. The difference is in point of view. The first three stories depict the painful epiphanies of young boys as to the condition of their society; the last three depict groups of mature people put in situations involving politics, the arts and religion and comfortably insensible to their corruption. The society at beginning and end is depicted as culturally and spiritually paralyzed.

As to use of the word objective: in the context I was characterizing the fourteen stories as a whole and used it in Webster's sense of detached. I was not referring to point of view.

Limitations of space made comment on the numerous paralysis images and their variations incomplete. In general, I tried to avoid the obvious as was true of the opening paralysis image in "The Sisters" which has elicited much explication already and also those fully discussed in recent or readily available criticism as the gnomon image which Professor Friedrich has himself elucidated very interestingly.<sup>1</sup>

Florence L. Walzl University of Wisconsin (Milwaukee)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Gerhard Friedrich, "The Gnomonic Clue to James Joyce's *Dubliners*," *Modern Language Notes*, LXXII (1957), 421-424.

# News and Ideas

Editors: Ross Garner and Louis H. Leiter, University of Nebraska

BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY STUDIES: Two articles of interest to readers of CE have recently appeared, "God and Immortality in Dostoevsky's Thought," Louis C. Midgley (Autumn 1959), and "The Wages of Sin in Hawthorne," Marden J. Clark (Winter 1959).

CATHERINE ANNE PORTER: "Symbolism happens of its own self and it comes out of something so deep in your consciousness and your own experience that I don't think that most writers are at all conscious of their use of symbols. I never am until I see them. They come of themselves because they belong to me and have meaning to me, but they come of themselves. . . . I have a great deal of religious symbolism in my stories because I have a very deep sense of religion and also I have a religious training. And I suppose you don't invent symbolism. You don't say, 'I'm going to have the flowering Judas tree stand for betrayal,' but of course, it does." Flannery O'Connor: "I really didn't know what a symbol was until I started reading about them. It seemed I was going to have to know about them if I was going to be a respectable literary person. Now I have the notion that a symbol is sort of like the engine in a story and I usually discover as I write something in the story that is taking on more and more meaning so that as I go along, before long, that something is turning or working the whole story. Recent Southern Fiction: A Panel Discussion, Wesleyan College, Macon, Georgia.

"AN INTERVIEW WITH FLANNERY O'CONNOR" (Censer, Fall 1960): Did the writers' course in the State University you attended help you learn how to write? "Yes. . . . When I went there I didn't know a short story from an ad in a newspaper." Symbolism? "Symbols you are conscious of are those that work. All during the story, 'Good Country People' the wooden leg is growing in importance. And thus when the Bible salesman steals it, he is stealing a good deal more than the wooden leg. Symbols are big things that knock you in the face."

OUTSTANDING ESSAYS in The Sewanee Review (Winter 1961): "Nihilism and Notes from Underground," Joseph Frank; "Durrell's Alexandrian Series," Bonamy Dobree; "Vestiges of Creation," essay on Yeats, Thomas Parkinson.

"ARE YOU GRIEVING over Goldengrove Unleaving?" The Wall Street Journal (January 30, 1961) reports on the degree market: "Holders of MA's, Ph.D's in Liberal Arts Get More Business Job Bids, but Some Firms Cite Problems: They claim men with advanced degrees usually seek higher salaries than they deserve and often are so studious by nature they wouldn't fit in well in a business organization. The bachelor's degree, especially those in liberal arts, mean less and less as time goes on. Everyone pays lip service to a liberal arts education, but when it comes to a selection, management usually likes to get the ready-made graduate. 'Sometimes ready-made graduate. people with advanced degrees are so studious they are a problem.' 'We sometimes wonder whether a man is better off learning all sorts of theory or learning [our] way of doing things.' Too much education can result in people with academic "apron strings" attached, which inhibit their business decisions and creativity." "It's Margaret you grieve for."

PSYCHOANALYSIS and the Psychoanalytic Review (Winter 1960-61) has two essays of interest to students of Dickens and Lawrence: "The Death Instinct in Dickens' Novels," Leonard F. Manheim; and "Freud and Lawrence," Eugene Goodheart.

DID MISS EMILY SLEEP with that corpse for forty years? No, answers Elmo Howell, who quotes Faulkner's statement setting forth the meaning of "A Rose for Emily." See *The Explicator* (January 1961).

A PORTRAIT OF T. S. ELIOT nude to the waist and his essay, "On Teaching the Appreciation of Poetry," in *The Teachers College Record*, Columbia University (December 1960), have just reached us. Of the former, Mrs. Eliot said, "It was naughty of them to have printed it." Of the latter, Eliot says: "I must admit that at the turn of the twentieth century there were pre-

cious few great poets about, and still fewer poets whom the authorities would have considered suitable for our perusal. Swinburne would hardly have done in those days; I don't know whether he has reached the school curriculum today. . . . Not only were we not encouraged to take an interest in the poetry actually being written, but even had we been, I doubt whether we should have thought of entering into correspondence with the authors. . . . I do not wish to suggest that I deplore the introduction of the young, as a part of their education, to the work of living authors-to the work of some living authors. Nor am I suggesting that I think that the methods of teaching are altogether wrong. All I aim to indicate is that the teaching of contemporary poetry is a difficult task, and that contemporary poetry cannot be taught by exactly the same methods as are suitable for poetry of the past. . . . The teacher who aims at teaching pupils to appreciate contemporary poetry, to distinguish between the good and the bad, the genuine and the spurious, the original and the imitative, to enjoy the best and only the best, needs himself to have both enthusiasm and discrimination. He needs to be as well educated, as scholarly in his knowledge of the literature of the past, as the teacher who confines his tuition to the literature of the past; and he needs independent good taste. . . . Perhaps I am merely clamouring for the Ideal teacher. But don't 'Educationists' sometimes forget, in their teaching about teaching, that the one essential for good teaching is the good teacher? The good teacher then will instruct his or her pupils well in the historical understanding of literature, at the same time will lead those of them who have the capacity to see that the literature of the past, about which the educated person must be informed as a part of history, is also literature to be enjoyed, and that without enjoyment it is meaningless. The good teacher will make pupils aware that literature is a continuous activity, and that the more literature is being made even while they are busy with that of the past. . . . In introducing the pupils to modern poetry the teacher likes, he will be reminding them of the essential part of enjoyment. . . . My Ideal Teacher, accordingly, will teach the prescribed classics of literature as history, as a part of history which every educated person should know something about whether he likes it or not; and then he should lead some of the pupils to enjoyment and the rest at least to the point of recognizing that there are other persons who do enjoy it. And he will introduce the pupils to contemporary poetry by exciting enjoyment: enjoyment first and understanding second. . . . Our own poetry of today and that of our forefathers, the foundations upon which we build and without which our poetry would not be what it is, will eventually be seen as forming one harmonious whole."

FIRST PERSON, a new journal devoted to "biography-autobiography, memoirs, narratives of travel and adventure, observations of nature and society, and humor-satire," appeared last fall. Its first issue contains work of Thornton Wilder, Ford Madox Ford, and many others, and an exchange of letters between Mark Twain and William Dean Howells. M. D. Elevitch, Drumlin Road, Rockport, Massachusetts, editor, says, "Correspondence welcome."

DONALD SUTHERLAND, Professor of Classics at the University of Colorado, whose verse play satirizing Biblical fundamentalism, My Sister, My Spouse, may be read in the Prairie Schooner for Winter, 1960-61, has an essay in the Winter number of the Colorado Quarterly, called "Be pleasant about the new religiosity." The first half of his essay is a common sense, witty exposition of the dilemma the widely heralded renewed interest in religion puts a humanist into, especially a humanist who is not interested in religion. Sutherland adduces sentimental clichés about "godless Russia" as evidence of the confusion and says, somewhat sadly, that "In America as in Russia religion is most probably here to stay." He wishes, however, that the religious people would not make it so hard for the unreligious to co-exist (it was easier before the revival), and is led to wish wistfully for "a genuine publicist of atheism," for Sartre and Russell, unfortunately, "are not devoted to atheism as a cause." The difficulties for the atheist are, apparently, formidable. His position isn't respected, even if it is, as it is not, thought to be possible. In ordinary social give-and-take he

is often forced for form's sake to call himself an agnostic, or, "he can still maintain the amenities, by saying he is after all . . . a skeptic." But in any case he is continually defined out of existence by the religious person who just can't understand his state of mind. "The atheist may do better, after all," says Sutherland, " . . . if he sticks to the simplicity of the atheist position and does not complicate matters by assuming agnostic or skeptical attitudes out of politeness." The agnostic or skeptic makes no act of faith if he can help it, but, "atheism, being a terminus of reason and faith alike, is far more congenial to religion than are less resolute positions." The atheist and the religious person can, therefore, "go on talking more profitably about something else, since their minds are both made up on the subject of God." The second half of the essay seems less persuasive than the first. For the attack Sutherland launches from his prepared predicament is rather heavy-handed. He has little difficulty in seeing religion as a weapon of war, a tool of authority, and a standard of misconduct, and finding it wicked on all three counts. One hopes, however, that Sutherland does not think the subject is exhausted at that. We can all agree that the "religiosity" of the title (whatever that is) is a bad thing. But one is not quite so sure that Sutherland is not, finally, as intolerant of religious people as he accuses them of being of him.

BROOKS OTIS, Professor of Classics at Stanford, has published an essay on St. Gregory Nazianzus, "The Throne and the Mountain" (Classical Journal, January 1961, the fifth in a special series on Late Antiquity). Otis shows how Gregory was related to the complex forces operating in the Hellenistic world of the fourth century both in his life and in his writing. Otis summarizes the problems of the time as centering in the metamorphosis of Christianity from an isolated sect which had repudiated the world into a position of dominance over it, the amalgamation of theological orthodoxy with pagan metaphysics, and the adaptation of the Greco-Roman culture to Christian society. Often, Otis implies, Gregory seemed to oscillate between the choices presented to the age: to repudiate the world as a monk or to live in it as a secular priest; to abandon

philosophy for the inarticulate experience of devotion or to put Christian theology on a metaphysical basis; to practice the stylistic excellence of a rhetor in sacred discourse or to eschew the poets and rhetoricians altogether. As Otis's images of throne and mountain indicate, Gregory ultimately rose to heights in both areas of experience: the world, philosophy, and culture on the one hand, and devotion, theology, and the church on the other. From the biographical details which Otis narrates and the voluminous quotations from Gregory which he presents, one suspects that the apparent conflict in Gregory between the throne and the mountain was resolved; an efficient integration of the two apparently resulted that would demonstrate the unsatisfactory nature of choosing either to the exclusion of the other. Human nature is infinitely complex, and Otis seems reassuringly aware that scholarship is well set to work upon the dimly grasped relationship among subliminal experiences.

THEODORE SOLOTAROFF has written an informative and appreciative essay on Harry Golden ("Harry Golden and the American Audience," Commentary, January 1961. Golden publishes the Carolina Israelite, a one-man newspaper, from which snippets were taken for his book, Only in America. Solotaroff marshalls impressive evidence of Golden's popularity, summarizes his themes (the warmly human family life of the Lower East Side, the "decline of ethnic variety and the related loss of individualism"), solves the paradox of Golden's speaking both for nonconformity and the "unassuming millions," and accounts for the incongruity of the South's respect for him and his liberal stand on integration. Golden flatters the South, Solotaroff says, as "a healthy, liberalizing society," and, at the same time, criticizes or lightly lampoons "its intransigence on the matter of integration." But Golden is by no means perfect; he is schmalzy, opinionated, given to superficial, unoriginal, and erroneous notions about history and literature, and is too often satisfied with nice, folksy sentiment. On the other hand, without his defects, the implication is, Golden would not be so virtuous, in the etymological sense of that word.

# **Books**

Editors: ROBERT E. KNOLL and BERNICE SLOTE, University of Nebraska

#### A NATION ILL-READ, ILL-SPOKEN, AND ILLITERATE

Americans should need no committee to discover the obvious truth that as a nation we shall one day be judged not by our armies but our music, not by our weapons but our painting, not by our motor cars but our poetry, not by our TV serials but our drama. History will be merciless in assessing our contribution to man's accumulation of enduring wisdom and creative achievement. The gleam of our chrome, the thrust of our tailfins, the glossiness of our advertising-these will become the materials of future satire which will dramatize details of our decline and fall. Or if we awake in time, they may be hailed as the warning signals which stirred the sleeping and aroused the indifferent.

As a nation we can become disturbed about cancer of the lungs, but remain unmoved by cancer of the spirit. We appropriate funds to clear the slums of the city, but we cannot summon the resources to clear the slums of the mind. Through concentration of great national energy we may develop ourselves into a country well-fed, well-housed, well-clothed, yet through our inner blindness remain ill-read, ill-spoken, and culturally illiterate.

English teachers feel a special anguish for the sickness of the national soul, for they suffer from an acute awareness of the deepness of the disease, and they charge themselves with the desperate tasks of relieving its symptoms and removing its causes. If they are dedicated, as they usually are, they think of themselves not as custodians of an official grammar but as bearers of a living language; not as keepers of the dead past but as transmitters of a dynamic culture. When they find their students apathetic, their communities indifferent, their country disinterested, they begin to wonder about the national destiny. When they find themselves overburdened with classes and pupils and overworked with papers, plays, and clubs, their true subject matter displaced by irrelevant drill and inconsequential "real

life" experiences, they lose their sense of serious purpose and vital function.

The National Interest and the Teaching of English (NCTE, 1961, paper \$1.95, \$1.65 to members) sounds the urgent cry against the roar of the wind. It is a cry that, even as it is drowned out in the general babble, must be sounded again and again, until those in high places hear and act. The facts are frightening. Samples: one-fourth of the nation's elementary teachers do not have college degrees, and even with degrees, they have studied little English. Of the country's high school English teachers, only about half have English majors in college, and frequently those with English majors have had too few of the proper courses. The average student load for the high school English teacher is 150 to 175, when it should be less than 100. As a consequence, many students read little and write less. In 1960, approximately 150,000 students failed tests in English for college entrance. In spite of these startling statistics, English continues to be ignored as everything else is strengthened-from physical education to physics, from home economics to homeroom guidance.

There have been panic measures that suggest a superficial concern. If the pupils are illiterate in writing letters, a letter-writing course has been introduced. If the students flunk English in applying for entrance to college, an English test-passing course has been offered in the senior year. These frantic measures defeat themselves and simply delay the time when the bitter truth must be faced: there is no way for a student to absorb language and literature except through constant reading of the great classics, frequent writing under educated guidance, continuous and systematic study of the nature and structure of language. There must be national recognition that these disciplines are the core of English and that English should be the core of every

educational program, whatever the level or kind.

The blame for the appalling state of English teaching lies everywhere, with all of us who teach, with those who administer our educational institutions, with the groups that both support and govern, and not least with society at large, an advertising culture which extols the organization man as its ideal and which finds its deepest values in a public relations cult. If NCTE is to get

the support for English teaching it requests in this alarm-sounding report, it must stir up the values of society. This is a task worthy of a serious organization and a devoted profession. If in trying to reestablish the centrality of their discipline English teachers assist society in reexamining its beliefs and in reviewing its values, what greater purpose can they serve?

James E. Miller, Jr.

#### LANGUAGE AND THE TEACHING OF LANGUAGE

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN MOD-ERN TIMES (SINCE 1400) by Margaret Schlauch (Warsaw: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1959; distributed outside Poland by Oxford University Press, 316 pp., 30 s.) This book is not likely to supplant the standard histories of the English language, for a number of lesser and greater reasons. It was printed behind the Iron Curtain; and it makes mention (brief and rather noncommittal, but mention all the same) of Marxist linguistic theory. It has rather little to say about the language before Chaucer; its treatment of the vocabularysources of English words, word formations, semantic change, and the like-is comparatively impoverished; the discussions of phonology, morphology, orthography, and of such varied things as the development of the dictionary, dialectal differences, and problems of usage-though some of them are delightfully succinct-are not otherwise equal to other treatments.

But on the long neglected and crucially important matter of syntax, this book is strong. The work of twentieth-century descriptive linguists is allowed rather more than a footnote; the book throughout reflects the emphasis of recent linguistic studies upon word order and the development of function words in modern English. Attention is drawn to developments in syntax and sentence structure and aspects of style in each century from the fourteenth to the twentieth. And though none of these discussions may be said to be at all complete—they are "meant to be suggestive rather than exhaustive"—this sort of history

of the language is of both interest and value to students of literature, for whom our standard texts have often seemed impressive but largely irrelevant collections of

THE ENGLISH VERB AUXILIARIES, W. F. Twaddell (Brown University Press, 1960, 21 pp., paper). This little book is a rarity and a treasure: it is immensely thicker than its pages. It is a book to be studied, not simply to be read. And as one studies, he becomes increasingly delighted by the remarkable concision with which Professor Twaddell (Brown) treats the semantics and the grammatical characteristics of the "primary" and "modal" auxiliaries, along with a pithy treatment of the "concatenative" and "imperative" verbs and a note on verb "relics" in modern English. Finally, there is a group of applications to foreign language teaching.

Though the set of applications seems to direct this little book toward the teacher of foreign languages or of English as a foreign language, the book has value for all teachers of English as well, for it succinctly analyzes the system of English verb auxiliaries. Unhappily, most of us teachers of English must admit that our knowledge of this system-indeed, our knowledge of our language system as a whole-is confined, as it were, to our tongues. We are unable, in many respects, to distinguish ourselves as teachers of English from users of English; and this inability has become one of our most embarrassing pedagogical liabilities. Professor Twaddell's little book can offer us real help in making that distinction, if we will but study it with care.

STYLE IN LANGUAGE, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok (Technology Press of M.I.T. and John Wiley and Sons, 1960, 470 pp., \$9.50). This remarkably rich and provocative report of an interdisciplinary conference on style, held at Indiana University in the spring of 1958, illustrates a number of the difficulties which linguists, psychologists, and literary critics have with one another. Unhappily, the linguists and psychologists often seem uninterested or only obliquely concerned with what literary critics think are essential problems in literature. Quite as unhappily, the literary critic often seems to demand that the behavioral scientists must put things in terms to suit him if he is to listen to them very carefully. And most unhappily of all, too many of the participants from all sides write badly: this book is a tough plough for any reader, and chiefly, I suspect, because many of the contributors are more concerned with intradisciplinary accuracy and responsibility than with interdisciplinary communication. Ironically in a conference on style, style is rather less often the man than the linguist, the psychologist, or the Scerary critic.

· Yet the reader who is willing to front these difficulties will find much to reward him, from the initial exercise in literary analysis by I. A. Richards (Harvard) to the splendid bibliography which Professor Sebeok (Indiana) has compiled. Most English teachers have a very great deal to learn from their friends in other disciplines, about-to follow roughly the ordering of materials in this handsome book-linguistic, phonological, metrical, grammatical, and semantic aspects of style and the psychological approaches to its problems. It would be healthy for English teachers to recognize along with Roger Brown (MIT) that the "values phobia of the behavior scientists" is "almost balanced by the statistics phobia of the literary critics" and to concur in the conclusion of Roman Jakobson (Harvard) that "a linguist deaf to the poetic function of language and a literary scholar indifferent to linguistic problems and unconversant with linguistic methods are equally flagrant anachronisms."

DUDLEY BAILEY

University of Nebraska

LANGUAGE AND LIFE IN THE U.S.A. (American English for Foreign Students), Gladys G. Doty, Janet Ross (Row, Peterson, 1960, 621 pp., paper, \$8.50). The authors, who have taught English to foreign students at the University of Colorado, Macalester College, the State University of Iowa, and the Netherlands, have written a textbook that covers four important areas in the teaching of English as a foreign language: communication through listening and comprehending; practice in reading; the study of English structural patterns; and the study of American pronunciation, stress and intonation. Though the text combines features of the direct method with the oral approach, there is perhaps too little emphasis on the latter technique which is of paramount importance if the production of the basic structural elements of English is to become a matter of automatic unconscious habit. The text would be even more valuable and complete if it were supplemented by more oral drills on the order of those developed by Lado and Fries in their English Pattern Practices. The reading selections on American customs and culture are excellent and the structural problems of English are analyzed carefully, with the basic patterns presented in order of their usefulness and regularity of form. Vocabulary is taught in context and the importance of the students' familiarity with the chief linguistic features of English is stressed. On the whole, this volume contains superior teaching materials which must be used with discretion by the teacher for the varied and particular needs of the students.

OLGA STEPANEK UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA

FUNDAMENTALS OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR, Nettie Scott Riherd (Exposition-University, 1960, 42 pp., \$2.75). At something over 15 cents per page, including title page and table of contents, this barren book on "parts of speech, sentence structure and sentence diagramming" is an expensive but ineffective curio. SCRIBNER HANDBOOK OF ENGLISH, third ed., Albert H. Marckwardt and Frederic G. Cassidy (Scribners, 1960, 477 pp., \$2.50). A complete and reliable handbook by Professors Marckwardt (Michi-

gan) and Cassidy (Wisconsin), including general rhetorical advice, which is "an objective presentation of the facts of the language." Conservative but not dogmatic,

detailed but not confusing.

GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT, Leo Hamalian and Edmond Volpe (Putnam, 1960, 278 pp., paper, \$2.75). Detailed grammatical analyses of selected contemporary essays with workbook exercises. A commendable effort by editors (both at C.C.N.Y.) to make the study and application of grammar purposeful by attempting to "close the gap that exists in [the student's] mind between the theory of grammar and the practice of

writing."

FUNDAMENTALS OF PRESENT-DAY ENGLISH, Carle B. Spotts (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960, 364 pp., paper, \$2.50). Form "A," second series, continues this comprehensive workbook designed by Professor Spotts (Penn State) to enable the student to help himself learn what he should have learned in high school. Following a diagnostic test, the book provides simple but well illustrated definitions and relevant exercises on parts of speech, usage, and vocabulary. JAMES LILL

PORTLAND STATE COLLEGE

EFFECTIVE ENGLISH, Philip L. Gerber, (Random House, 1959, 453 pp.) ON ASSIGNMENT, READING AND WRITING, Herbert Hackett and William Baker (McGraw Hill, 1960, 339 pp., paper,

Effective English is impressive in scope and size: material to teach all things to all communications students crowds outsize, double-column pages. Yet the compositiontrained instructor may find the handbook section too brief, the many reading selections too fragmentary; and his speechtrained colleague may question the one-paragraph treatment of chapter-length topics. Some attempt is made by Professor Gerber (Utah) to combine the two disciplines ("Research: The Documented Speech and Theme") rather than just to put materials for both between the same covers. But the book raises a question older and deeper than itself: whether written and oral composition really "do well on the same bolster," or need twin beds. On

Assignment, unpretentious in size and subject, is exciting in content, actually approaching the ideal of "learning to write through reading." Analysis of a few student and professional models by Professor Hackett (Colgate) and Baker (N. Y. Teachers College, Buffalo) leads naturally into writing assignments, with excellent stress on rewriting. Even basic drill in mechanics, too often a separate and not clearly related study, is deftly fitted in to each unit, and the authors' tone is helpfully amiable throughout. As a bonus, reading speed and comprehension checks are provided for the major selections. The entire book is tear-out style, fine for the exercises in the back, questionable for the text itself.

LOUISE E. RORABACHER

PURDUE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE REMEDIAL READER, ed. Shirley Ullman Wedeen (Putnam, 1958, 250 pp., paper). Professor Wedeen (Brooklyn College) has provided a book that is largely useless to college English teachers, unless one's interests lie in seeing Macbeth, Act V, classified as "Old English" and in learning that Goldsmith's She Stoops to Conquer, Act I, has a Flesch "readingease" score of 74. Fifty 1000-word selections, Flesch scores, T-F exercises, "progress" graphs.

A SPELLING GUIDE AND WORK-BOOK, Falk S. Johnson (Rinehart English Workbooks, 1959, 152 pp., paper, \$1.90). A primarily self-help text by Professor Johnson (Illinois), demanding more honesty and self-awareness (e.g. in regard to the causes of one's spelling errors) than most poor spellers have. Analytically sound, exercises fairly good but difficult to score for grades. Might be useful as secondary

text in remedial course.

THE UNIVERSITY SPELLING BOOK. Thomas Clark Pollock and William D. Baker (Prentice-Hall, 1955, 122 pp., paper). Quite good as self-help text; exercises deadly to grade. Excellent analysis of rules and concise but ample coverage of various spelling traps by Professors Pollock (N.Y.U.) and Baker (N.Y. Teachers College, Buffalo). Particularly useful as spelling "handbook" for referring each student to his own problem area; preponderance of exercises discourages truly remedial student -as does any spelling book.

PHONETIC SPELLING FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS, Ralph M. Williams (Oxford, 1960, 180 pp., paper, \$2.95). Basically designed "for students old enough and mature enough to want to help themselves," Phonetic Spelling by Professor Williams (Trinity) is clearly supreme in the field. Thoroughly, logically, and clearly presented, the semester's material would suit almost any freshman program, with either primary or secondary emphasis. Essential for poor spellers, remedial and/or linguistic approaches.

MARGARET E. ASHIDA

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BASIC SKILLS FOR BETTER WRIT-ING, Nick Aaron Ford and Waters Turpin (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1959, 192 pp., paper); ENGLISH 2600: A SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM IN GRAMMAR AND USAGE, (Harcourt, Brace, 1960, 439 pp. + MASTERY TESTS, 32 pp., paper, \$2.60). The first of these grammar workbooks is traditional. A brief handbook (75 pp.) is followed by correlated exercises in both grammar and paragraph development. Exercises on the paragraph skillfully induce the student to careful analysis. Mr. Blumenthal's book contains 2600 questions of increasing difficulty. By answering these, the student "reasons his way" through grammar, without benefit of rules. Each page has six frames. The student answers question (frame 1, p. 1), turns for correct answer and a fresh question (frame 1, p. 3), etc. Greatest assets: enforced thinking and immediate correction of error. Grave danger: unwilling thinkers may consult answer before question Mastery Tests provides a check on such illegal procedure.

FOR WRITING ENGLISH, Charles W. Mulligan, S. J. and Michael P. Kammer, S. J. (Loyola University Press, 1960, 595 pp.). This book by Father Mulligan (St. Louis University), based on an earlier work by him and Father Kammer (Loyola University) is a thorough and conservative grammar and rhetoric intended for editors, secretaries, etc., as well as for students. Clarity and succinctness of language make the book a pleasure to read and provide

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SKILL IN READING ALOUD, Joseph F. Smith and James R. Linn (Harper & Brothers, 1960, 463 pp., \$5.75). AMERI-CAN FORUM: SPEECHES ON HIS-TORIC ISSUES, 1788-1900, ed. Ernest J. Wrage and Barnet Baskerville (Harper & Brothers, 1960, 377 pp., \$5.50). Professors Smith and Linn (University of Hawaii) have designed their book specifically for courses in oral interpretation of literature. However, its unusual "what to look for" approach and its focus on textual analysis should make it worthwhile reading for teachers of literature who are seeking new ways of stimulating classroom discussion. American Forum, on the other hand, is a work which Professors Wrage (Northwestern) and Baskerville (Washington) planned with a variety of possible uses in mind. It could, for example, be used with profit in certain composition or communication courses in which the process and technique of communication are studied against the background of historical controversy. Consisting of twenty-six speeches representing both sides of eleven vital questions, the book affords an opportunity for examination of the argument-counterargument relationship as well as the rhetorical structure of significant and cogent public address. D. E. McCoy University of Illinois

WRITING FROM EXPERIENCE, Richard A. Condon and Burton O. Kurth (Harper, 1960, 308 pp., \$3.75). "Repeater index" is R. M. Eastman's formula for judging a Freshman English anthology, (see CCC Dec. '60 partly in terms of originality and "traditionality of taste," keeping in mind those editors who confuse "originality with eccentricity" and "tradition with triteness." The "repeater index" of this text is medium, a combination of the traditional and the modern (30% being in the public domain), with the unusual addition of a few poems and short stories. The material is arranged by Mr. Condon (Space Technology Lab.) and Professor Kurth (Southern California) to "conform to the patterns of existing handbooks of rhetoric." There are no "helps"

for the student, but the instructor may procure a guide to discussion and analysis. The selections provide variety and are

interesting.

ESSAYS OF OUR TIME, ed. Leo Hamalian and Edmond L. Vople (McGraw-Hill, 308 pp., 1960 paper, \$2.25). This collection by professors at C. C. N. Y. has a low "repeater index"; 45% of the articles from current magazines bear the copyright date of 1958 to 1960! Only 5 are earlier than 1954. Most of the authors, however, are recognizable to anyone who "keeps up." Perhaps this book is intended for sophisticated students who seek fresher approaches to traditional themes. The text is, therefore, suitably uncluttered by editorial comment.

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A DICTIONARY OF DIFFICULT WORDS, Robert H. Hill, ed., (Philosophical Lib., 1960, 351 pp., \$5). Pocketsize. Useful for past twenty years. Words like gene, chota hazri, hoplite, apomecometer, stich, Quirinal, rabbet, Taal and 15,000 others.

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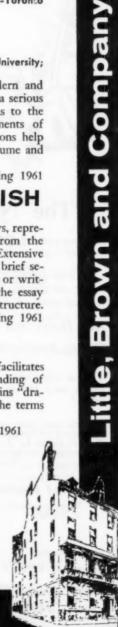
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